

THE
MIDNIGHT
HEARSE
AND MORE
Ghosts

by
Elliott
O'Donnell

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by ELLIOTT O'DONNELL



A SECOND COLLECTION OF TRUE
AND LEGENDARY GHOST STORIES

FOULSHAM

This second gripping collection of true tales from the files of Elliott O'Donnell, Britain's most famous ghost-hunter, bears the chilling stamp of authenticity, relating in concise, straightforward fashion some of the most bizarre experiences with the supernatural ever recorded, together with some extraordinary legends. O'Donnell wastes no words but with calm hand guides the reader through a stark procession of factual horrors—not only of the dark but of broad daylight too—in several instances of which he was himself an eye-witness. There are more than thirty well documented, spine-tingling stories in this book, including the remarkable case of "The Vanished Suitor of Shooter's Hill", in which O'Donnell, investigating a badly haunted house in South London, uncovered what was believed to be a shocking act of murder by mother and daughter a quarter of a century before.

243.50

THE MIDNIGHT HEARSE

and More Ghosts

*A second collection of true tales and legends
gathered by ELLIOTT O'DONNELL,
ghost-hunter for more than half a century*

By

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

Arranged by H. Ludlam

Author of

"A Biography of Dracula"

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Also by Elliott O'Donnell (Arranged by H. Ludlam):
THE SCREAMING SKULLS AND OTHER GHOSTS

INTRODUCTION

This second collection of true ghost stories from the files of Britain's renowned ghost-hunter is of the stuff to confound the most hardened sceptic. It is the fruit of meticulous investigations into the supernatural spread over more than half a century.

Each case has been thoroughly checked and re-checked with all the sources available. Even the few striking legends included—each of them a disturbing mixture of local tradition and hard, irrefutable fact—have been accorded the same painstaking, personal research.

Only in a few cases, for various reasons, have the names of people directly involved been changed.

In addition to these well documented tales Elliott O'Donnell describes some of his own more remarkable encounters with the supernatural; on a lonely road in Scotland, on murder beach and moor, and in a house filled with the hate of two dead women—where, through the appearance of a ghost, he uncovered a ghastly crime committed by mother and daughter twenty-five years before.

From the strange saga of the haunted ship, the Sarah Emma, to the mysterious morning light where Patrick Mahon took a knife to his mistress, Elliott O'Donnell writes in that spare, grippingly direct style concerned only with the facts in hand, which has made him not only our foremost authority on the supernatural but also the most readable, and the most read.

H.L.

Dedicated to the memory of my
beloved wife

THE CHOKING FINGERS

It was on a bitterly cold night a few years before the first world war that Daniel George Lockley, a young representative for a Lancashire mills, found himself hunting for a reasonably-priced hotel in the neighbourhood of Euston, London. After many fruitless enquiries he at last found one that suited his allowance of travelling expenses.

There was something depressing about the place, Lockley sensed it directly he crossed the threshold, and he became even more conscious of it as he followed a trim chambermaid up a gloomy staircase to his bedroom.

"Have you many visitors?" he asked.

"We are full up," the girl replied. "The only room vacant was the double-bedded room you have taken. Had you wanted it for more than one night we couldn't have let you have it, since it is let from tomorrow night."

"That's a stroke of luck," he laughed, and was about to make some other remark when the maid started backwards so abruptly that they nearly collided.

They were now on the first landing, making for the long, dark corridor facing them. Looking down it, Lockley caught sight of a tall woman in black hurrying along it with her back towards them, so that he could not see her face. He got the impression, however, that she was good-looking, but that there was something odd about her. She entered a room at the far end of the corridor.

The maid now quickened her pace, and, leading Lockley along the corridor, stopped outside the room he had seen the tall woman enter. The girl's hand trembled as she grasped the door-handle, and she appeared to hesitate before turning it. When she did open the door, to his surprise the room was empty.

"This is your room, sir," the maid announced, a scared expression in her dark eyes.

"What's frightening you?" he asked. "And where's the lady I saw come in here?"

"What do you mean, sir?" she answered, making, he thought, a great effort to appear calm. "No lady came into this room."

"But she did," he persisted. "A tall lady in black."

The girl now replied quite coolly, "You are mistaken, sir. That lady went into the next room."

Much puzzled, Lockley ordered something to eat, and when the maid had gone took stock of his surroundings. The room was large and old-world, with a low ceiling, a half-tester canopied bed, and heavy black oak furniture. In one corner was a cupboard let into the wall.

Having unpacked a few things from his bag, he descended to the coffee-room, where after a meal he chatted with some of the other visitors. Then, very tired, he returned to his room.

Directly he entered it he again experienced a strong sense of depression, and found his mind reverting to the incident that had occurred on his arrival. The longer he pondered over it the more certain he felt that there was some curious mystery attached to the house, and that it centred round the tall woman in black, whose appearance seemed to have caused the chambermaid such alarm.

He examined the cupboard, which was big enough to conceal half a dozen people, but, to his relief, it contained only two suitcases and two women's hats. He next looked under the bed, and, having assured himself that no one was in hiding anywhere and that both window and door were securely fastened, he undressed and got into bed, and was soon asleep.

He awoke with a start and a feeling that something extraordinary was about to happen. It had been dark when he went to bed, but now a brilliant moonlight poured through the blindless window into the room, throwing every object into clear relief. Outside, the gleaming white rooftops told him there had been a heavy fall of snow. Seasonable, but unappreciated by Lockley, who had a long journey before him the next day.

He could not sleep again. Unpleasant thoughts kept chasing through his mind. The moonlight appeared suddenly to become whiter, and he followed its course from the bed, across the floor, to the cupboard, the brass handle of which gleamed so brightly that his attention became focused on it.

By degrees he sat up, his eyes all the while riveted on the handle, and to his horror it suddenly moved.

At first he thought it must be his imagination. He closed his eyes, but when he reopened them and looked again at the handle

it was still moving, turning slowly round. There was a slight creak, then the cupboard door began to open. Very gradually the aperture grew.

Then a fresh horror gripped him as he saw a white hand creep stealthily round the door, which continued slowly to open.

With an almost superhuman effort he picked up one of his shoes from the bedside and hurled it at the cupboard. There was a bang and a clatter as the shoe struck the woodwork and dropped to the floor. The hand vanished.

He got out of bed and went to the cupboard, fighting back his fears, and opened the door wide. To his infinite relief the cupboard, save for the suitcases and hats, was empty.

Having tightly closed the cupboard door and put two chairs against it, Lockley then returned to bed. But hardly had he laid down when he heard a scraping, shuffling sound.

He sat up again. The chairs he had set against the cupboard were being pushed away from it and once more the door was slowly opening. He decided this time to remain where he was and see what would happen. He settled down, feigning sleep, and presently heard what sounded like the rustling of a dress, accompanied by soft, surreptitious footsteps. Whatever had been in the cupboard had evidently come out of it and was now crossing the floor to the bed.

As the rustling and the steps drew nearer, an awful fear gripped him and he dived under the bedclothes, drawing them over his head. Also, he moved to the edge of the bed nearest the door of the room, determining that when he could no longer stand it he would make a bolt for the corridor.

Nearer and nearer came the creeping footsteps. When they reached the foot of the bed they paused. Then, after what seemed an eternity, they went on again, always in the same stealthy manner.

Lockley feared they were coming round the bed to the side he was on, but to his relief they crept round the other side. He tried to move, but all the use had gone out of his limbs, and in his helpless condition he was compelled to lie waiting, while the footsteps gradually and with horrible furtiveness crept up to the head of the bed.

Again the footfalls halted, and he sensed the thing, whatever it was, poised over the bed, gloating at his terror. Suddenly the bed began to shake, and from close beside him, *from in the bed*, came a series of dreadful gasps. Someone by his side was being choked to death.

Gradually the sounds and the shaking ceased. There was again a period of stillness, then the footsteps began again. Round the bed they crept, to the side he was on. He tried frantically to rise, but could not.

The steps came nearer, and presently hands felt their way cautiously over the bedclothes to his head. The clothes were gently drawn back and cold bony fingers fastened themselves relentlessly round his throat.

Lockley now experienced all the sensations of being slowly strangled, till at last there was a merciful blank and he sank into unconsciousness. When he recovered, shafts of wintry morning sun were filtering into the room and someone was knocking at the door. It was the chambermaid with his can of hot water.

Lockley said afterwards that he might have been inclined to attribute the whole ghastly experience to a nightmare, had it not been for the still wide open cupboard door, and the two chairs and his shoe near it. He intended questioning the landlord about the room, but was in such a rush, with little time in which to catch his train to the West of England, that he decided to save his questions till his next visit to London.

Because of business commitments, however, Lockley was not able to revisit the hotel for some considerable time, and then it was to find that in the long interval, the hotel had been demolished to make room for a more modern building. But he was a persistent young man and made numerous enquiries in the neighbourhood, which eventually resulted in his gleaning some sparse information regarding the old house.

One of its landlords, he was told, an elderly man, had a young, good-looking wife, who was given to intrigues with other men and to everlasting quarrelling with her husband. One night they were heard wrangling, and the next day the wife informed her neighbours that he had left her, vowing never to return.

A morning shortly after this she was seen to drive off with one of her numerous admirers and a large black trunk, and to return the same night, without the trunk, but with the same lover. After that she announced that her husband had died abroad and that she was going to carry on the business.

She did so for a time, and then one day she was seen going away with the same large black trunk, but with another lover, having (it transpired) disposed of the business. After that no one living in the neighbourhood knew what became of her.

FOR GOD'S SAKE TAKE IT OUT!

AN advertisement of an unfurnished house to let at a village on the Great West Road, within ten miles of Swindon, attracted the attention of Mr. Benjamin Gregg-Smith. It was a detached two-storey house with a garden, and situated within easy walking distance of a railway station. The rent was only £40 a year.

The agent to whom Gregg-Smith went told him the house had been vacant for several years, and did not seem very enthusiastic about it, which Gregg-Smith attributed to his small return from the low rental. Gregg-Smith viewed the house, called The Beeches. It was old and picturesque, the walls, in which rooks had built their nests, being covered with lichens and honeysuckle.

The garden was full of weeds and couch grass, while the interior of the house had a mouldy smell not uncommon in properties that have stood empty for a long time, but Gregg-Smith liked the place. It was the right size for him and his wife and daughter Joan. He took it on a three-year lease and moved in in September.

Inhabited, with a tidied garden, cheerful fires and well lit with electric light, The Beeches presented a comfortable appearance, and all went well for the first few weeks; but at the end of this time the family were disturbed at night by the sound of footsteps stealthily ascending the staircase leading to the first floor. Gregg-Smith switched on the light and went on to the landing to investigate, but saw no one.

Then, one night the door of the room in which he and his wife slept, opened wide, and they sensed the entrance of an invisible person who came staggering across the floor and cried, "Take it out! For the love of God take it out!" There followed a gasping sound expressive of excruciating pain and a blood-curdling scream of terror, which was succeeded by an intense silence even more frightening in its suggestion of extreme horror.

The Gregg-Smiths were appalled. Unable to bear even the thought of spending another night in the house, they left the next day, and returned to London. They called on the agent who had let them the house and told him what had happened, and their feelings can be imagined when he showed no surprise at their harrowing experience, only further disappointment at the property now back on his books.

The agent said that about twenty years previously, a Mrs. Ranton, a widow, and her daughter Alice, a girl of sixteen years of age, had occupied the house; that one night they had heard someone in the garden, and Alice had run downstairs to make sure the front door was locked.

Soon afterwards she came staggering into the room where they both slept, crying, "Take it out! For God's sake take it out!" and Mrs. Ranton saw to her horror a sheath knife protruding from her daughter's back. She was too appalled for some seconds to do anything—to stir or utter a sound—and then as she heard footsteps stealthily creeping up the stairs she screamed, "Help! Help! Murder!"

Some people chanced to be passing the house and hearing the cries at once ran to it. They were in time to save her, but not Alice, who was dead when they entered the building. The murderer escaped and was never caught.

Mrs. Ranton, who had not been well for some time, never recovered from the shock she had received at this apparently motiveless brutal assault. She only survived her daughter by a few weeks.

"Ever since then," the agent gloomily remarked, "The Beeches acquired the reputation for being haunted, and what you have described must have been a ghostly re-enactment of what took place the night poor Alice Ranton was murdered."

THE MIDNIGHT HEARSE

ATTEMPTS to raise the spirits of the dead have been made throughout the ages, and sometimes with success. There are various methods of ghost raising; often certain spots, such as a wood, ancient ruins in isolated places, old churchyards and lonely cross-roads, have been chosen.

Usually a circle is made with the aid of a compass on the soil, or if the raising is in a building, on the floor. The experimenter places a chair and table in the centre of the circle. On the table he puts a candle, crucifix and Bible. He then seats himself on the chair.

Sometimes he delivers an incantation; other times he remains silently waiting the advent of the ghost, which may occur any time between midnight and two o'clock.

The ghost may glide noiselessly into the room, rise from the floor, or bound into the room. The experimenter, if he is not too overcome with fright, will speak to the ghost, and express his desire to help it in any way he can.

As a rule, however, the ghost makes no reply, vanishes, and leaves the experimenter no wiser than he was before.

A strange tale is told about a famous university.

During the last century a number of undergraduates secretly started a Hell Fire Society in one of the colleges. The leader of the society was a young man named Ransom. He was wild and reckless, and inspired the other members of the society with the desire to raise a ghost.

Accordingly, on a dark November evening the most adventurous ones among them assembled in Ransom's sitting-room, laid their candle, crucifix and Bible, and invoked the Devil to appear.

But their invocation, strong though it was, seemingly proved futile.

Late that night two Fellows of the college were returning to their quarters when they saw a hearse-like carriage draw up outside the college. Wondering who could be coming at such a late hour, they stood and waited to see if anyone would get out of the carriage.

Presently a tall figure in a black cloak and a wide brimmed hat, worn so low over the forehead that the face was hidden, got out of the carriage and stepped into Ransom's sitting-room, which was on the ground floor, through a window which they had felt sure was closed. A few moments later the cloaked figure reappeared, dragging a body to the carriage.

A spurt of moonlight focused on the body, throwing the facial features into strong relief, and the now terrified Fellows saw that it was Ransom.

As soon as the body of Ransom was in the carriage the cloaked figure got in also, and the carriage drove away.

The two Fellows, unable to believe their own eyes and certainly not wishing to be caught up in any nefarious activities that might be going on, lost no time in getting into their quarters, and kept quiet about the unlikely spectacle.

But in the morning they learned to their extreme horror that Ransom had been found dead in his sitting-room.

A story is told of some art students in Paris meeting in the sitting-room of their leader similarly to raise a ghost, though in this instance with a firm idea of the spirit upon whom they were calling—a man who had been guillotined. The students performed the ceremonies which they had been told were appropriate for the occasion, and were sitting in breathless expectation for the advent of the ghost, when suddenly the door of the room swung open, and in glided the apparition of a headless man.

They fled in terror from the room.

The ghost was never known to appear again, but the room acquired the sinister reputation of being evilly haunted.

Then there is the account of the raising of the ghost of the Chevalier de Saxe (documented by Wrascale).

There was a rumour that a treasure was hidden in the palace in Dresden, where de Saxe lived. His heir, Prince Charles, needing money, determined to raise the ghost of de Saxe in the hope of finding out from it where the treasure was hidden. In company with some of his followers he knelt in a corner of the palace gallery and repeated various incantations.

Strange unearthly sounds were heard, succeeded by diabolical howls and yells. The door of the gallery burst open and in rolled

a black ball, enveloped in a mist. A face developed in the mist, and the watchers saw that it was the face of the Chevalier de Saxe.

The apparition angrily demanded the reason for its being summoned. One of the men who was with Prince Charles exorcised the ghost, which vanished, leaving Prince Charles and all the others with him absolutely terrified.

No attempt was ever again made to raise the ghost of de Saxe.

An extraordinary case which came to my knowledge concerned a West Country youth whom I will call David Walsh. Being desirous of raising ghosts Walsh went on St. Mark's Eve to crossroads reputed to have been the scene of witches' covens, and where gibbets once stood. At midnight he performed the ceremony specified in an occult book he had. He had barely finished when a procession of ghostly figures came silently towards him along one of the crossroads.

At the head of the procession was a tall, shrouded apparition which signed to him peremptorily to fall in at the rear of the procession. Terrified, he begged to remain free.

"Very well, David Walsh," the shrouded apparition said, "you are permitted to remain free until ——" (naming a date and hour) "when we will call for you."

The procession then retraced their steps the way they had come.

Walsh raced home and told his parents what had happened. They blamed him for experimenting with unholy practices, but assured him that what he had seen was solely due to his imagination, and that there were really no such things as ghosts.

But on the very date and at the exact hour which (as Walsh stated) the shrouded apparition had said it would call for him, he died suddenly.

The hope of gaining knowledge of the future has been responsible for many known attempts to raise spirits. In this connection it became strongly believed that if on Midsummer's Eve or St. Mark's Eve, a person anxious to know future local happenings were to sit alone at midnight in the back of a church, he would see the phantoms of those destined to die within the year come to the church in order of their decease and rap at the church door.

There is a story of two brothers, John and James, who, curious to learn what the future had in store for them, sat in the porch of a church on St. Mark's Eve.

Precisely at midnight a procession of shadowy forms came up the church path, two by two. All the faces were recognised by the youths as people in the parish. Walking by himself at the end of the procession was the counterpart of James. Slowly and solemnly

the figures came to the church and passed into it through its closed door. Within the year all the people whose phantoms were seen, including James, died, leaving John to tell the tale.

One of the practices on Christmas Eve is to sit at a window at midnight, where one will see, if psychic, the phantom of a person who is likely to influence their life within the next 12 months come up the garden path.

My half sister was carrying out this vigil one Christmas Eve when she saw the phantom of a woman come up the garden path. Within a year she met the material double of the woman she had seen, and this person did indeed play a great role in her life.

In some parts of Britain there is the practice of peering in at the window of a house, when, it is said, one will see the phantom of the person destined to die within the year sitting in the room without a head.

A well known story is told of St. Agnes Eve. A girl anxious to see her future husband summoned him to appear. At night he entered the room where she was sitting, put a dagger on the table, and vanished.

Some time afterwards a strange man came to the town where she was living; he bought property there, saw the girl and married her. Shortly after the marriage the man opened a drawer in one of the rooms one day, and saw the dagger he had left there.

"You are the woman," he said, "who forced me to come to her one night. It really happened and was no dream. You must die."

And taking up the dagger, he stabbed her with it.

THE HEADLESS SPECTRE

It is a remarkable fact that the Scots, who are generally supposed to be dour and very hard-headed, are among the most psychic of peoples. This is particularly true of Scots who are descended from the pure Celtic strain.

Even today one finds both in towns and in secluded villages of the Highlands men and women who are credited with the gift of "second sight."

It is in some of the old country spots of Scotland where I loved to roam that I had several of my earliest experiences with ghosts, and I shall certainly not forget my experience in Angus with the headless spectre.

I was staying at an old mansion house and had cycled one evening to the nearest railway station to see some friends off. Having damaged my cycle on the way I was obliged to leave it at the station—it was then too late to get it repaired—and walk home. Close on ten o'clock I set out, and the prospect of a long tramp—I was at least five miles from the house where I was staying—did not strike me as particularly cheering.

I had covered about a quarter of the distance and was walking as usual with long swinging strides, when I suddenly heard footsteps behind me. They seemed to be those of a heavily-built man, but there was something so peculiar about them that I instinctively looked round to see the person who was following. I saw no one, however, for at that moment the moon slipped behind a dense cloud.

I stopped. The strange footsteps stopped also. I went on again and they also came on, but they now began to be so erratic that I thought they could only belong to some intoxicated person.

On either side of the road there was nothing but open ground, and there was in the darkness a feeling of such intense loneliness

and isolation that I grew a little alarmed. At length, determined to risk an encounter with the drunken man and demand to know why he was following me in this strange manner, I stopped again and turned round.

As before, the darkness was so intense that I could see nothing clearly, but forcing myself to appear quite calm I shouted out, "Hello, you there! Who are you? What do you want?"

The footsteps at once ceased, but there was no reply. I called again, louder and more forcibly, but the result was the same.

I went on again—and still the mysterious footsteps followed me.

I now succumbed to fright and began to run. To my horror the footsteps still came after me, sometimes closing up behind me, then gradually falling behind again, until they sounded faint and very far away in the rear. They continued in this manner till I was almost in sight of the mansion house, when they abruptly ceased.

I had gathered that the people with whom I was staying were very sceptical about anything to do with the supernatural, so I did not say anything to them about my adventure, not wishing to be ridiculed. I resolved, however, to walk the same road again the following evening and see if the same thing happened.

This time the weather was all that could be desired. The sky was clear of clouds and shining in the sea of stars was a glorious full moon. I had got about halfway to the station, and was by then beginning to think that nothing would occur, when suddenly, in addition to the sound of my own footsteps, from behind me I caught the sound of others.

I swung round at once, but as before, there was no one to be seen. Yet the sounds continued. On and on the footsteps came with awe-inspiring regularity.

Suddenly on the white shining surface of the road, almost in the exact centre, I saw a black shadow advancing with the footsteps and drawing rapidly nearer to me. Terrified, for there was something indescribably eerie about both the footfalls and the shadow, I scanned the fields and hedgerows on either side of the road in the hope of finding something to explain the phenomenon. I could not.

In the meantime the shadow rapidly approached me—so rapidly that I had barely time to step aside and let it pass.

As it went by I saw with a freezing chill that the shadow was apparently that of a short, stout man, but headless. There was a well-defined neck, but beyond it, where a head should have been, nothing!

I must have stood paralysed for some time. When next I became conscious and glanced around, all was deathly silent and there was no sign of the shadow anywhere.

The following evening I summoned up courage to walk along the same route for a third time, but on this occasion nothing happened, nor did I ever again hear the footsteps or see the headless shadow.

I made endless enquiries in the neighbourhood and eventually came across a very aged labourer, who told me he recollected as a boy, hearing his father say he had seen a headless ghost on that part of the road. His father, he said, declared that an old tramp had, long years before, been found murdered about there, and it was generally believed that his ghost haunted the vicinity of the crime on certain nights in the year.

Very soon after this I had another strange experience in Angus. The people with whom I then went to stay lived close to a river, and being at that time an ardent angler, I frequently fished in it. The summer happening to be an unusually wet one—in fact, the local farmers, with wry faces, declared that it had never rained so much before within their memory—the river was very much swollen.

Hoping to profit by the conditions and return with a basket full of trout, I set off one evening with my rod. The weather seemed perfect; it was not in the least degree sultry, though the sky was cloudy and the air warm. Arriving at the riverside I set to work at once, and had been fishing for about an hour without as much as a bite, when I suddenly felt I was no longer alone.

On looking round I could see no one, but the feeling that someone was at my side remained, and once I heard what sounded like a deep drawn sigh, a long, protracted and very gentle "Ahh!" almost in my ear.

Not once but several times there seemed to be a slight swishing noise, as if a line were being cast close to me. On each of these occasions I looked sharply round, for I was very much startled. But no one was there. Apparently I had the wide, swollen river and its banks, as far as I could see, all to myself.

The feeling that someone stood beside me, however, did not lessen; it grew even more pronounced and at length became so unbearable that I left the spot and moved to another, some little distance away.

It was of no use, for I had not been there long before the same thing happened. I became conscious of an invisible somebody or

something watching me, and then again I heard the long drawn sigh and occasional swishes, as if an angler close beside me were "throwing in."

I stood this for some minutes, then again moved on, but when next I threw in the sounds began again, and no matter how many fresh places I tried, it was the same.

Finally, my nerves became so jangled that I decided to abandon fishing for the night and go home. I had taken my rod to pieces and was about to pick up my empty basket and depart when an old farmhand approached and asked if I had had any sport.

"No," I replied. "Not even a bite."

"And you're not likely to have," he said, "as long as you fish in such company."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "What company?"

"I mean your companion," he said. "That tall man in knickerbockers. He cleared off just as I came up. He may be a great friend of yours, but you'd do well to leave him behind when you both come here again. I watched you both from a distance, and he kept following you about and getting his line mixed up in yours. He a fisherman! Why, with that long, lean body of his and that white face, he looked more like a ghost."

The old man laughed scornfully.

Too dumbfounded to make any comment at that moment, I questioned the old labourer when I saw him again a few days later, but he repeated his statement and said somewhat huffily, when I told him I had been fishing alone, that he did not understand *my joke*!

Not far away, in Montrose, there lived at that time a very pleasant old woman who, having been left badly off financially on the death of her husband, in order to make ends meet "took in" a little needlework.

I called on her one day with a commission I had got for her from one of my friends, and, as I stayed and chatted with her and eventually came to talking about ghosts, she told me the following story in connection with her husband's death.

"As you may have heard," she said, "my husband was always fond of gambling, but in his later years he became more and more addicted to it, and consequently he was always in money difficulties.

"One night he came home later than usual, and to my surprise—for I am sorry to say he was also addicted to drink—sober.

"Minnie," he said in such solemn tones that I looked at him

in amazement, 'Minnie, my days are numbered. I have just six weeks to live and no more.'

"I replied that he was speaking nonsense, and asked him what he meant.

"Well," the old woman continued, "he told me a long story, too long to go into in full, it would take up too much time; however, it will be sufficient if I tell you the main gist of it, and I think I can do so in his own words.

"This evening,' he began, 'I went to Sandy Smith's (Sandy was one of his most intimate friends) and stayed with him till close on twelve. I suppose we had a few glasses, anyhow, I don't remember what happened after leaving him, till I found myself right close by the river, trying to wade across it. The cold water must have cleared my head, for I somehow suddenly became myself again, and was about to set off home when a boat, containing seven people, six rowers and a steersman, dressed all in black, approached me. "John," the steersman called out to me, as the rowers rested on their oars, "John, we have come for you. Get in at once, there is room."

"I looked at him, and his face was so stern and strange it frightened me, and my fright turned to absolute terror when I saw that both he and his companions in the boat were all persons who had died long ago. They were my father and mother, grandparents, Uncle Jock and Aunt Maggie. They all sat together silent and motionless, with their eyes, which were all glassy and expressionless, fixed on me.

"As I made no reply—I was far too terrified to speak—the steersman told me again that he had come for me, this time sternly motioning me to be seated in the boat. Knowing full well that if I went with him I should never return, I fell on my knees and implored him to spare me, and at last he said I might go, provided I promised to meet him in that exact spot at that hour six weeks hence.

"I promised of course, and directly I had done so the boat rowed away and I came home as fast as my feet would carry me."

The old woman sighed and spread out her hands.

"I laughed at him," she said, "but he swore that all he had told me was true, and there must have been something in it, for from that day he gave up drinking and gambling and became a regular attender at church. During the whole of the next few weeks he was more or less nervous and apprehensive, and as the last day of the sixth week arrived he spent all the morning reading the Bible, rested in the afternoon, and at nine in the evening

went to bed. I also retired earlier than usual and laid down beside him at about ten.

"Now, as a rule I sleep badly, but that night I did not. I fell fast asleep almost as soon as I got into bed.

"I was awakened by a loud noise. To my consternation my husband was not in bed, and, on getting up to look for him, I found him lying at the foot of the stairs, dead. Apparently he had fallen from the top to the bottom and broken his neck, and as it was then a quarter-past twelve, his death had, in all probability, occurred at the exact hour he had promised to meet the phantom boatman."

THE HAUNTED CROSSROADS

MERVYN HOBBS and his friend Duncan Brown, emerging from the Forest of Dean, in Gloucestershire, which they had been exploring with much pleasure, stopped at the Green Oak inn to enquire the best route to the distant village for which they were now heading.

The Green Oak was a very old hostelry, famous in the days of William Harris, the notorious highwayman, who used to frequent it. In an oak tree opposite the inn, bullets which he fired at the police officers who came to arrest him were found.

After Hobbs and Brown had had an excellent supper they asked the best road for them to follow. The landlord replied that they should drive in their one-horse trap along the Bristol Road, past Copper Wood. There was another, shorter way, but he did not recommend it.

"Oh," said Brown, "we don't mind a fairly rough road, we are used to it after driving about the forest."

"That is not what I mean," said the landlord, shaking his head.

"What then?" Hobbs queried. "We are in a hurry to get on."

"It passes the Penley crossroads," the landlord said reluctantly, "which have a bad reputation."

"What's wrong with them?" Brown asked.

The landlord was silent.

"Come, out with it," Hobbs exclaimed. "You intrigue me. What's wrong with the crossroads? Cut-throats hanging around them?"

"No, sir," the landlord said slowly. "They are said to be haunted. Strange things have happened there."

Hobbs and Brown both laughed loudly, and declared that a mere ghost was not going to deter them from lopping a useful mile or two off their journey.

"Very well, gentlemen," the landlord said, "I will get your trap ready."

It was a fine night, with a full moon and numerous stars shining in a cloudless sky. The two men found that the road was rather narrow but smooth. It ran through well wooded country and in some places the trees nearly met overhead.

After driving for an hour they came to what they took to be the crossroads, which were surrounded by open ground, mostly wasteland. There was a signpost but it did not bear the name of their village and they were in a quandary which of the four roads to take.

They looked around them, and saw not very far away a light.

"I'll see if there is a house," Brown told Hobbs. "Stay in the trap while I'm gone."

He got out of the trap and set off in the direction of the light, which increased in size the nearer he got to it. He soon saw that it did indeed come from a house, a fine country mansion standing in extensive grounds. The windows on the ground floor were fairly ablaze with light, and on entering the broad carriage drive he heard gay music, as if there was a party.

He went up to the house and rang the bell.

After a short wait the door was answered by a footman in livery. Brown was about to speak to the footman when a middle-aged gentleman in evening dress seeing him said, "We are having a dance here tonight. Come in, friend, and watch the dancing."

Brown thanked him and said he regretted he could not; he and his companion were anxious to get on to their village but did not know the way, could he kindly put them right? The man immediately ordered the footman to go to the Penley crossroads with Brown, and point out to him the right road.

Accompanied by the footman Brown returned to the crossroads, where Hobbs was still seated in the trap waiting for him. The footman, who had not spoken a word, indicated with his hand the road they should take.

Taking a half crown from his pocket, Brown dropped it into the footman's hand. To his astonishment the coin went *through* the hand and fell to the ground. The footman, still silent and apparently unnoticing, retraced his way to the house.

Totally at a loss to explain what had happened, Hobbs and Brown experienced for the first time an eerie feeling that all was not well. They quickly took the road indicated to them and, driving on into the night arrived without another stop at their destination.

In the morning they told the friends with whom they were staying about the house near the crossroads and the mysterious footman.

"Why, there has not been such a house as you describe for many years," their host explained. "It was pulled down after a murder was committed in it."

"Some people named Gosset lived there. One night while they were having a ball, someone hurled a knife at a girl named Hilda Grace. The knife pierced her heart and she fell dead. The person who threw the knife was never definitely identified. A certain man was suspected but there was not enough evidence to warrant his arrest."

"The Gossets left the house after the murder, and within a year after their departure it was pulled down."

Brown, despite this story, was so positive that he had been to the house that he and Hobbs drove back to the crossroads later that day to look for it, but although they searched around for some time they could find no trace of a house.

On the ground, however, where the horse and trap had been standing, lay the half crown that Brown had given to the footman.

THE VANISHED SUITOR OF SHOOTER'S HILL

IN the early part of the 1880s there lived in Veremont House, Shooter's Hill, the widow of a retired City merchant named Rungate, and her only child, Bertha. Mrs. Rungate, who gave one the impression of being a rather shy, reserved woman, did not know many people in this district of London. She was not over-robust for one thing, and for another her income was strictly limited, each a sufficient reason in itself for not entertaining.

Mrs. Rungate's one interest in life was Bertha, who seems to have been allowed to do pretty nearly anything she liked. As she evinced a great dislike of lessons, she did not go to school, and up to the age of sixteen could neither read nor write. She was not a tomboy, however, and appears to have been very fond of dress, possessing a knowledge of the world far beyond her years.

Her chief amusement was to powder up and adorn herself in all the finery she could procure and parade about in Greenwich Park, making eyes at all the well-dressed young men she saw.

Bertha's conduct at length became so noticeable that her mother was eventually obliged to tell the girl she would have to place her under some restraint. A governess then made her appearance at Veremont House, to be speedily followed by another and another, none of them being able to cope with the self-willed and disobedient girl, who was supported in all her extravagant behaviour by her foolishly adoring parent.

At last, however, when it had become the recognised rule for the governess to leave at the end of six weeks, the unexpected happened. In answer to the usual advertisement in the "Sunday Times," a young woman called Jane Ducrot obtained the situation, and from the moment of her arrival showed she had a very different influence over her pupil to that possessed by any of her predecessors.

There was something in Jane Ducrot's appearance, in what were subsequently described as her dark, flashing eyes, in her well-moulded chin and strong mouth, as well as in her firm and decisive manners, that not only awed, but, curiously enough, seemed to attract Bertha. At all events, the girl consented to remain in the study with her, presumably to do lessons.

The two were often seen on the heath and in Greenwich Park together, Bertha still in all her finery, and Jane Ducrot in a plain tailor-made coat and skirt, and those who noticed them took them to be on very friendly terms.

It was now observed that whereas prior to Miss Ducrot's arrival Bertha, despite her obvious efforts to the contrary, was seldom seen out of doors in the company of a man, she was often seen with members of the opposite sex when accompanied by her governess—unkind critics remarking that it was Miss Ducrot and not Bertha who was the attraction.

Jane Ducrot had been at Veremont House about six months when great excitement was caused in the household by the advent of Philip Rungate, a nephew of the late Mr. Rungate. Mrs. Rungate had no sooner received tidings of Philip's proposed visit than she made grand preparations for his reception, repeatedly informing Miss Ducrot how wealthy he was, and how confidently she anticipated he would marry her daughter. Bertha also took Miss Ducrot into her confidence, telling her how fond she was of Philip, and showing her affectionate letters she had frequently received from him.

From what the mother and daughter both said, Miss Ducrot could have had little doubt in her mind that they were bent on capturing Philip, and expected him to finally pledge himself to Bertha during his impending visit.

The eventful day came at last. Philip Rungate arrived, paid his respects to mother and daughter and immediately started talking to Miss Ducrot. It was very possible he had met her somewhere before. Anyhow, he lost no time in improving the shining hour, nor did anyone at the time apparently resent such rapid friendship. It was not until he had been in the house for nearly a fortnight that the harmony that had hitherto existed met with its first discordant note.

Philip had left the house directly after breakfast with the announced intention of meeting an old schoolfellow in the City, and Bertha, happening to stroll into the long wilderness of a back garden after morning lessons, had found him secreted at very close quarters in the summer-house with Jane Ducrot, who

appeared much disconcerted at being discovered.

Philip offered a blundering explanation to the effect that, returning earlier than he had anticipated, he had entered the premises by the back way, and seeing the summer-house door open, had ventured in. There he had found Miss Ducrot, who was suffering with a bad headache, and had chosen that sanctuary as it was cool and quiet.

Bertha said nothing to either of them, but she told her mother, and the two took to covertly watching Philip and the governess. For some days nothing of any moment occurred, and then Bertha, leaving the two together in the drawing-room on the pretext of running upstairs, returned immediately and surprised them in the act of kissing. Bertha at once informed her mother, and Miss Ducrot was peremptorily summoned into the latter's presence. She unhesitatingly admitted being in love with Philip. A violent scene ensued, and she was eventually given a fortnight's notice.

This was on May 1st. The days that followed saw a complete change in the atmosphere of the household. Whereas everything had run smoothly before, all was now discord and depression. Bertha shut herself up in her bedroom most of the day, Mrs. Rungate continually nagged at Jane Ducrot, and Philip wandered about as if unable to make up his mind whether to go or to stay.

Matters went on in this way till the morning of May 14th, when Bertha burst into her mother's room, almost speechless with rage, and told her she had caught Philip and the governess together again in the summer-house, and that they were behaving like an engaged couple. As Miss Ducrot was leaving the next day Mrs. Rungate advised her daughter to say nothing about it.

"Wait till the witch goes," the fond mother advised, "and then when she asks for a character I will speak to her."

At lunch, however, a bombshell was dropped by Philip when he announced his intention of returning home by an early train the following day.

"He is going away with her," Bertha whispered hoarsely.

"I fear so," her mother replied, "but I don't see how we can prevent it."

That evening at about eight o'clock Philip went into the back garden, and a few minutes afterwards Bertha was seen by one of the servants going there too. It was then getting dusk, and rain was falling heavily. At 9.30 or thereabouts Bertha returned alone, looking very white and agitated. That night Philip did not come in, nor did he turn up to breakfast, nor was he, despite the efforts of his friends, ever heard of again. He vanished as wholly and

completely as if the earth had swallowed him.

It is a curious thing that a man can disappear without causing any great sensation, but it is by no means so uncommon as one might suppose, and it certainly was so in the case of Philip Rungate. Mrs. Rungate and Bertha declared he had left them in a huff, and their explanation was not disputed. What was generally surmised when the previous state of affairs at Veremont House leaked out, was that he had gone off with Jane Ducrot; but if so, he must have joined her in London, for when she left Blackheath Village Station by the 9.30 a.m. train she was certainly alone.

After this episode the Rungates stayed on at Veremont House till 1896. They then went to the Isle of Wight. Bertha died in 1904, and Mrs. Rungate in 1906. In the autumn of 1910 I first heard that Veremont House was haunted.

My informant was a Mr. Harper. He had taken the house in 1908, but had been obliged to leave it before the year was out owing to extraordinary noises and the figures of a man and girl that were constantly seen prowling about the garden.

"I made enquiries about the former tenants," he told me, "and they said they had experienced the same phenomena, and had left purely on that account."

The case seeming to be well corroborated, I decided to investigate it, and on the evening of January 3rd, 1911, entered the premises of Veremont House armed with a torchlight and revolver, and accompanied by my pet fox-terrier. I first made a thorough examination of the place, poking into all the cupboards and recesses, and even climbing through the skylight on to the roof to see that no one was concealed anywhere. Then I locked the front door, bolted all the windows, brewed myself some coffee over a spirit-kettle, gave the dog some milk and biscuit, and meditated where I had better sit for my vigil.

Finally I decided on the landing at the foot of the upper storey, and there, half-sitting, half-lying on the floor, with my back against the wall, and the dog close beside me, I waited.

Confronting me was the dark staircase leading up and down, while on my right was what might once have been the drawing-room, but which was now a dusty scene of bare boards and moonlight. On my left was an open window overlooking the long, weed-ridden back garden.

Twelve o'clock struck, the friendly footsteps of a passer-by died away in the distance, and I was now alone and deserted except for the dog lying quietly beside me among the shadows. All was now

intensely still and hushed, and despite my firm resolve I would have given much to be out in the open.

The scratching of an insect made my heart stand still; my sight and hearing were painfully acute. Presently a familiar sickly sensation gradually crept over me, the throbbing of my heart increased and the most desperate terror laid hold of me. The dog uttered a low, savage snarl. The house was no longer empty. Something was on the landing overhead, preparing, so my senses told me, to descend.

I could not stir, nor close my eyes—I could only sit there staring at the staircase, praying that the horror would soon emerge and that my ordeal would quickly be over. Down, down, down it came, until at last I could see it—a white, evil face surmounted by a mass of black hair. The eyes were the most alarming feature—large, dark, very lurid, very sinister—and they were fixed on mine with a mocking leer.

So fascinated was I by them that I could hardly notice the rest of the face. I only saw it was very ugly and malshaped, and was that of a girl, presumably not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age. She was clad in a dark velvet dress, much beflounced, her wrists covered with silver bangles and her fingers with rings. I did not observe the feet.

She passed quite close to me, and putting a short, stubby finger to her lips, beckoned to me to follow. I roused myself and did so, and keeping close behind her, descended into the hall and out into the back garden. Leading me across a long, untidy strip of ground, she stopped at the entrance to a broken-down summer-house and smiled evilly at me. As she did so the most awful series of groans, as of some man in excruciating agony, came from within it. She then pointed to the farthest corner of the garden. There was a loud, reverberating crash as if a whole cartload of stones had been dropped from a height on to the summer-house floor, and the girl vanished.

Throwing open the door of the summer-house I peered in, but there was nothing there—nothing but the moonlight and shadows.

I visited the premises again next day, and paid a man to dig in the spot indicated by the phantom. He worked hard, and after removing about three feet of soil came upon something solid. It was a circular piece of iron, with a ring on it. We both pulled at the ring, and after great exertions raised the iron cover to disclose a deep well.

I went for additional help, and we let one of the party down

the well with a rope. At the bottom he found the skeleton of a man, together with a knife and pocket watch marked with the initials "P.R." There was nothing to show how the man had come by his end.

It was then I made enquiries and learned the story of Bertha and Philip Rungate, which I have related.

What is the explanation of it? In my opinion, based on what I saw and heard in the house and garden, it is this: Bertha, a naturally badly-disposed and spoilt girl, infuriated beyond words at her cousin preferring Miss Ducrot to herself, had followed him to the summer-house on the night of May 14th, and had given him either some poisoned food or drink. He died in the most acute agony, and Bertha, terrified as to what might happen to her, had taken immediate counsel with her adoring mother.

There was a long disused well in the garden, and into this the mother and daughter dropped the body of Philip. Then they got a quantity of loose soil and effectually concealed all traces of the well. The utter improbability of either of them committing a crime guaranteed their success.

With the removal and burial of the skeleton after our discovery, the hauntings ceased, and Veremont House became as quiet and homely as any of the other houses in Shooter's Hill Road.

THE NURSE'S RETURN

FLEETWOOD, like Blackpool, does not impress one with being the sort of place to harbour ghosts, yet the Lancashire resort has possessed quite a number of bona fide haunted houses. The following account of one came to me recently.

A few summers ago a certain general and his wife were being driven through the town in a car they had hired for the summer months when the attention of the wife was drawn to a tall woman in the grey uniform of a nurse whom she saw before her on the road.

The car had slackened speed, owing to the traffic, and the nurse was walking along with strides that far more resembled a man's than those of a woman. Furthermore, she was behaving in a very erratic manner, moving first to one side of the road and then to the other, and swerving in and out of the stream of vehicles in a manner that caused the general's wife the greatest apprehension. She called out to the chauffeur to go very slowly in case he should injure the woman.

"Injure what woman, madam?" the chauffeur asked.

"Why, the nurse!" the general's wife exclaimed.

"The nurse?" the chauffeur repeated, puzzled. "Where is she?"

"There, right before you!" the general's wife shrieked. "Oh, do be careful!"

Her husband, who up to this time had made no comment, now leaned forward. "I don't see any nurse, Therese," he said. "Where is she?"

"Why, there, there!" his wife called out, half rising from her seat and pointing frantically in front of her. "There she is, just in front of the car. No, now she's on the pavement, now crossing again to the centre. Oh, do be careful! She must be mad, poor thing. Oh, God, God, you've run over her!"

In an instant the car stopped. The general and the driver jumped out together to extricate the woman, but to their amazement no woman was there. There was not a sign of one.

"You must have imagined you saw her, Therese," the general said.

"Don't be so silly, dear," his wife replied testily. "I saw her as plainly as I see you—I swear I did."

Seeing that she was becoming quite hysterical the general made no further comment on what appeared to him to be a complete delusion, but got quietly back into the car.

They then drove on, and not another word was said about the incident till that night after dinner. His wife then remarked, as soon as they were alone, "Charles, I do hope I am not going mad, but I have seen that nurse again."

She then went on to explain that, as she was coming down to dinner, she saw to her alarm a woman in grey ascending the staircase towards her, and as the woman drew nearer she recognised her as the hospital nurse she had seen knocked down and run over by their car that morning.

"I moved aside to let her pass by," she said, "but she did no such thing. She simply walked straight at me, and I believe went right through me, for I felt a dreadful sensation, just after we seemed to be in contact. I turned round immediately and saw her going on up the stairs quite unconcerned, as if nothing had happened. When, however, she got to the top, she vanished. Dear, do you think I am going out of my mind?" She was very much distressed.

The general felt sure that what his wife had experienced was some kind of hallucination or delusion, very possibly due to some nervous disorder; still he did not like to tell her so, and consequently soothed her and carefully avoided all further mention of the subject.

But from that day onward his wife knew no rest; she was continually seeing the nurse, though no one else saw her. This constant persecution not unnaturally told on her health, and the general became so alarmed about her that he consulted a specialist in Harley Street. He fully expected the specialist to say it was a question of the brain, but, to his astonishment the specialist said nothing of the sort.

After listening very attentively to all the general and his wife told him, the specialist asked, "Have you a dog?" When told they had not, he replied, "Well, I advise you to get one. Keep it by you and when next you see the figure, notice if the dog behaves

in any way unusual. If it does, speak to the figure, and should you get no answer, consult my friend Mr. L. whose address in Fleetwood I will give you."

The general's wife, very relieved, promised to follow the specialist's advice. Before they left London she bought a fox terrier, and they took the animal back with them to Fleetwood.

Three evenings after their return, the general, who was alone in his study reading, was startled at hearing the dog begin to snarl and then to whine. Getting up from his chair he went to the door and, looking out, saw the animal crouching in the hall with its hair bristling on end.

He was wondering what on earth was the matter with the creature, when there was a loud shriek from his wife, and on running into the drawing-room, where he had left her, he saw her lying back in her chair, with a tall figure in grey bending over her. The sight so staggered him that he came to a dead halt, utterly unable to speak, and while he stood there helpless, the figure turned round and looked at him. To add to his horror, it had no features in its face—where the features should have been was simply what appeared to be a wall of flesh.

Directly the figure turned and looked at the general, his wife screamed—"In God's name, let me go!" She uttered the same words twice, and, at the second mention of the Almighty, the figure seemed to sink into the floor and vanish.

It took the general's wife some minutes to speak with any degree of comfort, she was so very badly shaken, but as soon as she did recover sufficiently, she told her husband that she had been sitting reading, when, hearing the dog in the hall whine, she glanced up, to see a dreadful white, featureless face, if one might call it such, bending over her. Long, bony fingers moved stealthily over her dress towards her throat, and she felt she would undoubtedly have undergone all the sensations of strangulation had she not instinctively made use of the Deity's name.

Next day the general and his wife visited Mr. L. After plying them with numerous questions he suddenly remarked: "Have you bought anything secondhand lately—a piece of furniture, for example, or any china, or silver?"

The general's wife thought for a moment, and then said, "I bought a rather quaint old writing desk a few weeks ago."

"Before you saw the figure in grey?" Mr. L. asked.

"Yes," she replied, "I think it must have been, but only just before."

"Where did you get it, in this town?"

She nodded. "At —'s" she said. "In — street."

He paused. "I will make enquiries about it," he said, "and let you know the result."

Two days later he called on the general and his wife.

"Have you seen the figure again?" he enquired.

The general's wife replied that she had.

"Well," Mr. L. said, "I don't think it will worry you any more, if you do as I suggest. Get rid of that desk. Take it back to the shop you got it from and exchange it for something else. It belonged to a hospital nurse who committed suicide in this town some years ago. She attended mental cases, and was suspected of putting one of her patients out of the way. It was fear of arrest that is supposed to have led to her destroying herself. Do you recollect the date you first saw her—when you were driving in your car?"

She told him the date.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, looking at his memorandum book. "I see it was on that date you bought the desk. That clinches the matter. I was sure it was the desk. You see, she was very fond of it. It was a kind of family heirloom, and she followed you to your house, right here, in consequence.

"Do as I advise—get rid of it."

The general and his wife took the desk back to the shop it came from and exchanged it for another article, and, as far as they were concerned, the hauntings promptly ceased. Never again were they troubled by the figure in grey.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MOLLIE PHILLIPS

ONE fine Sunday afternoon in the autumn of 1929 Mollie Phillips, an attractive young servant girl, set out from the farm at Exford, Somerset, where she was employed with the professed intention of visiting her aunt at Cutcombe, about five miles distant across the wild and dreary moor.

She was never seen alive again.

For weeks hundreds of police and organised parties of people, old and young, on foot, horseback and in cars, crossed, recrossed and scoured all Exmoor in search of her, but in spite of their vigorous hunting not a trace of sixteen-year-old Mollie could be found.

It was not until eighteen months after her disappearance, in March, 1931, that her skeleton was found on Codsand Moor in a very shallow bog hole, a foot or two from the surface—how the body was not discovered during the great search was itself a mystery. The remains, too decomposed to show definite indications of foul play, were about a mile and a half from her road across the wild moor.

On receiving a Press call asking me to spend a night on the moor I started out at once, and on my arrival found the police still searching around the spot for anything that might furnish a clue to the manner of Mollie's death. Their efforts were fruitless. I stayed near them for some time and then left, returning the next day when they had finished the search.

The poor girl's mother identified her daughter from a pair of shoes, a tuft of hair, and some fragments of garments and corsets. Neither the missing girl's glasses, her hat, her coat, or the buckle of her dress were found.

It was dusk when I returned to begin my vigil at the forsaken

spot, which was cheerless enough in the daytime but much more so when the sun had gone down. In utter isolation and loneliness I stood on the sombre moor and looked around me, seeing no human habitation, not a shed, nor even a tree, only a wild, dark expanse of dismal bare ground and not a living creature anywhere near.

I had with me a powerful torch and by its light found the spot where the police had been searching. Then, as the hours slowly passed, I hovered around it, fancying at times—and it was mere fancy—that I was no longer alone but that close beside me was a form or identity not of this world, trying hard to tell me something that I ought to know.

Just after midnight I heard away in the far distance a low, melancholy cry. It might have been that of some living thing or it might not. It was immediately after this cry that I got a strong sense of death, not natural death but death with violence, in near proximity to me. I gradually became aware that it was actually *underneath* me—I seemed to be standing on death.

I could not see anything but I knew that something was now present at the spot with me. The sensation was uncanny in the extreme.

I spoke out and asked whatever it might be if I could be of help to it. I got no response, but it seemed as if the entity was striving very hard to tell me something.

I stayed around the spot till the first indication of dawn, still aware of that strong presence, and left it with the firm conviction that Mollie Phillips had been murdered.

Several people living in the vicinity told me they were of the same opinion, and the mother herself was firmly convinced that the girl had been lured away and murdered. To me, it was incredulous that Mollie, an Exford girl, who must have been thoroughly familiar with the moor, should have gone astray on it, not in the dark but in the afternoon, when it was quite light, and have fallen to her death in a quagmire no deeper than a very few feet, and out of which any person who was sane and able-bodied could have extricated himself or herself with the greatest ease.

And Mollie Phillips was strong, healthy, normal and agile.

Nevertheless, as there was no conclusive evidence of foul play the inquest verdict was one of death by misadventure. The foreman of the jury, giving this verdict, added, "It is our opinion that she was hurrying away in fright from some person when she fell into the bog."

Many others, myself included, believed otherwise, that the person whom Mollie encountered on that September afternoon actually killed her, then threw the body into its pitiful grave.

THE ROOM OF SIGHS

WITHIN a short distance of the Penmaenmawr railway station in Caernarvonshire stands a house that, periodically, has remained empty for years.

Once, after the tenants had left, it was found to be in such a bad state that the owner determined to have it thoroughly renovated, the exterior pointed and painted, and the interior painted and papered. It was while this was being done that one of the workmen had a strange experience.

He was alone in the building one evening, working overtime at a mantelshelf in a bedroom on the second floor. The place was very still and he was enjoying what he termed "a nice quiet time" when he suddenly heard, apparently close beside him, a most peculiar noise—a kind of cross between a sigh and a shudder, very protracted and expressive of the utmost terror.

Startled, he glanced hastily around, half expecting to see someone standing at his elbow, but there was no one there. Deciding that the sound must be due either to a draught from the half open door, or to the wind in the chimney, he went on with his work, but he had not been long at it before he again heard the noise, this time, so it seemed, just behind him.

He swung round sharply, but, as before, there was no one there. Convinced now that it did not come from the chimney he put down his tools and walked to the door, and as he did so he again heard the sound, as on the previous occasions, close beside him. After this, whichever way he went, it followed him. If he stood in the centre of the room, it was there; if he moved to the furthest extremity of the room, it was there also, sometimes louder and sometimes fainter, but always expressive of the same thing, unadulterated, unmitigated terror.

At last it infected him; he became frightened, and yielding to a

sudden ungovernable panic he fled. Nothing would induce him to work again in the house, alone.

During one of the periods when the house was let, a certain colonel came to stay as a guest there, and was given the room in which the workman had had the curious experience. On the evening of his arrival the colonel was standing in front of the washstand mirror shaving, when from, as he thought, just behind him, came a mixture of a sigh and sort of convulsive shudder.

It gave him such a start that he cut himself. Swearing hard, he turned sharply round, prepared to give whoever it was a severe admonishing, but to his unbounded astonishment there was no one in the room. Thinking it very strange, but that possibly he had imagined it, he resumed shaving and afterwards was proceeding to wash and dress when he again heard the same sound, this time close beside him at the washstand.

The colonel then underwent precisely the same experience as had befallen the workman. He moved about the room, and wherever he went the sound accompanied him. At last, quite exhausted, he sat down, but hardly had he been seated before the sound came again, this time so near to him that he was forced to realise that whatever originated it *was occupying the chair with him*.

Springing to his feet in terror he rushed to the door.

He refused to sleep in the room, and, although his host at once offered him another, he abruptly took his departure. After this the then occupants of the house kept the room shut up.

One night they drove out to an entertainment in town and did not return till late. On entering the garden they were much surprised to see the window of the locked room illuminated. All the other windows of the house were in complete darkness, but from this one there undoubtedly issued a strange eerie glow.

They glanced around and up at the sky to see if it could be due to a reflection, but they saw nothing that would in any way account for it. They then entered the house and proceeded in a body to the room.

The light was there right enough but what struck them most about it was its ubiquity. It was equally diffused everywhere, as strong under the chairs and table as it was above them, with the startling result that neither the furniture nor themselves cast any shadows.

They were marvelling at this when all became conscious of a feeling of faintness—it was just as if all the vitality was being sucked out of them.

Rousing themselves and making for the door with all haste, as they passed through on to the landing they heard in the rear not one, but a whole multitude of sighs, which left them with the impression that the room was absolutely full of presences.

They kept the room locked for the rest of their tenancy.

The next story came to me through a friend of the person who underwent a later unnerving experience in the house. This person I will call Dr. Moss.

Moss went on a visit to the house one Christmas some years ago. The first night he was there passed uneventfully enough; being very tired after a long journey he fell asleep almost the instant his head touched the pillow, and he did not awake until a servant came to his door in the morning with the hot water.

The second night of his visit was not so peaceful. As before, he locked the door and went to sleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow, but he was disturbed by the most appalling dreams and awoke with a violent start to hear something moving about the room. Holding his breath he listened attentively, but there was now absolute silence. Putting one hand very cautiously out of bed he was about to feel for the matchbox when it was suddenly slipped into his palm.

Moss always said afterwards that this was the most trying moment of his life. He could see nothing, for the room was in absolute darkness, but he felt most distinctly something was, just by his side, furtively watching him.

For some seconds he was too frightened to do anything. He dare not move lest whoever or whatever it was should pounce on him, but at last, forcing himself to be brave, he struck a match. There was no one to be seen.

To make sure no one was hiding in the room Moss got out of bed and searched everywhere, in the wardrobe and under the bed, but there was no sign of anyone. He got back into bed and blew out the candle, but he had hardly lain down before he again fancied he heard noises. He sat up immediately, and from close beside him on the bed there was a sound like a half sigh, half shudder, expressive of the utmost horror.

Moss, whose nerves were already badly shaken, sprang out of bed like lightning, and for the second time within a few minutes struck a light.

He spent the rest of the night out of bed, reading. When he came down to breakfast in the morning he told his host what had happened.

His host said he knew there were rumours that the room was haunted, but not believing in ghosts himself he had never attached any importance to them. He suggested he and Moss should do an all-night's vigil in the room, and to this Moss consented. There have been various versions of what occurred during the vigil, but the following is, I believe, the most authentic.

The two watchers lit their pipes, and for some time kept up a pretty continual flow of conversation until they suddenly saw a light. It was spherical in shape and of a greenish yellow hue. Both saw it simultaneously, and Moss, who had read a great deal of ghost lore and was something of a student, at once exclaimed, "That's a spirit light. A bad one, too. Green and yellow are invariably evil, very evil—so be careful!"

The light at first was by the door. Then very slowly it moved towards the bed, and, as it did so, the two men heard a noise, something between a sigh and a shudder, very loud and indicative of terror, not ordinary terror, but real soul-felt terror, terror of the wildest, maddest, most pitiable order, and it seemed to proceed not from the light but *from the bed itself*.

The light moved on. It came to the bed and hovered low over it, and then both watchers heard the bed shake violently for some seconds as if a desperate struggle were going on. Then the light left the bed and began to move slowly, very slowly towards them.

"I don't know whether it is my imagination or not," Moss's companion whispered, "but it seems to be growing larger."

What he said was true. From being spherical in form the light had now become more or less cylindrical, and was rapidly assuming gigantic dimensions. But what impressed the two men even more than its size was the sense of horror it inspired. This seemed to intensify momentarily—they felt it must be associated with something unutterably foul and venomous.

Still they did not stir, a hideous fascination holding them both rooted to their chairs. On it came, nearer and nearer to them, until at last it halted just in front of Moss.

The next moment he gave a wild cry—"It's got me by the throat!"—and began beating the air frantically with his hands. His companion tried to get up to go to his assistance, but for some seconds found himself limb-tied and utterly unable to do so, until finally by a supreme effort of will he overcame whatever it was that was holding him down and sprang to Moss's side.

"Turn on a light, for God's sake, quick!" Moss gasped. "Hurry, hurry, or I shall be choked!"

He was struggling desperately, and his companion, fearful of what the result might be, flew at once to the fireplace and lit the gas.

When he turned again to Moss, the latter was leaning back in his chair panting. "A glass of water," he said faintly, "and then I shall be all right." His companion at once poured him out one.

Moss rallied himself to explain, between gulps, "Though I did not feel anything so definite as fingers on my throat, I was acutely conscious of some peculiar presence there trying to strangle me. Had you not lighted the gas when you did, I do not think I could have held out much longer.

"Light is the only method of defence in a case like this."

THE WINGED THING

AN unusual feature of a haunting in the neighbourhood of Hoddesdon, in Hertfordshire, which I investigated was that the ghost, though decidedly fantastic and even alarming in appearance, was not only harmless but had been known, on more occasions than one, to have been instrumental in saving life.

One such occasion concerned the tragedy that befell Mr. Boreham, a much respected member of the Society of Friends, who occupied a house on the declivity of a hill near Hoddesdon, with his wife and three daughters.

One autumn evening the family was seated before a blazing fire in their cosy parlour, chatting with a friend, when all were startled by a loud knocking, followed by shouting and screams, coming apparently from the kitchen.

Mrs. Hummerstone, the friend, who was nearest the door, was the first to run out of the room and, on reaching the kitchen, saw Elizabeth Harris, the young servant girl, pushing against the back door with all her might to prevent someone getting in.

"It's Tom Simmonds!" Elizabeth cried. "He's got a knife and has threatened to kill me!"

Simmonds, a youth of eighteen, had worked for Mr. Boreham, but had proved so unsatisfactory that he had been dismissed. Elizabeth Harris, whom he had been courting, acting on the eldest Miss Boreham's advice had refused to see him again.

He had since told several people he intended to "pay Miss Boreham out" and to "do for Elizabeth Harris." Now it appeared he had come to fulfil his threat.

Suddenly Simmonds ceased trying to force an entry and Mrs. Hummerstone and Elizabeth were nervously wondering what he might be up to when, to their horror, there was a crash of glass in the back kitchen and they saw him climbing in at the window.

Mrs. Hummerstone begged him to go away, whereupon he stabbed her in the throat.

The rest of the household, with the exception of Mr. Boreham, who was very infirm, had by this time come out of the parlour and were about to run out of the house when he attacked them.

Simmonds stabbed the eldest daughter to death; then he stabbed Mrs. Boreham and Elizabeth Harris, but fortunately not fatally.

Then a strange thing happened. For no apparent reason he dropped the weapon and, with a wild scream of terror, made for the back door.

The survivors of this ghastly massacre listened in amazement to his footsteps as he raced across the cobblestone yard and along the high road toward the town.

Simmonds was found later hiding in a barn and, too terrified to make any resistance, was captured by the police.

Before his execution he told a strange story to his chaplain.

He said he was about to strike Elizabeth again when something icy touched him on the shoulder and, turning, he saw a tall, dark thing with dark wings, its body and face something like a human being's, frowning at him.

The thing, he said, followed him as he ran out of the house, and did not leave him till he sank to the ground and for a time lost consciousness in the barn where the police eventually found him.

The murderer's description of the ghost created great interest in Hoddesdon as several other people had testified to seeing a similar phenomenon.

One man who declared he had seen it said he was about to commit suicide when the winged thing appeared to him, and it had such an effect on him that he not only gave up his intention but, from being a ne'er-do-well and profligate, had worked to become the decent and much-esteemed member of society he was when I saw him.

THE MASTER OF THE SARAH EMMA

SOME years ago I stayed a night in an hotel close to the North Road Station, Plymouth. Among the few guests there was a gentleman named Grant. He got to know of my interest in the supernatural and, seeking me out, told me the following story, which, he said, was his one experience with the unknown and one he had not felt able to relate to anyone at length before, for fear of scepticism. Yet all the facts of the story could be verified.

Grant said it happened in Liverpool when he was a boy. He was living with an uncle in Duke Street, and his chief delight at the time was wandering about the docks looking at the ships. One day a young friend of his came along in great glee to say that his dad had bought an old ship lying in one of the small docks for timber. The men had not yet started demolishing her and if they went to look her over one of the men would row them across to the vessel.

The two boys went off at once.

They learned that the ship, a small brig, had not been to sea for more than twenty years. She had been built at the beginning of the last century and employed for the greater part of her career in the fruit trade with Barcelona and other eastern Spanish seaports. As they were rowed out towards her they had never seen a more dreary or dilapidated looking hulk.

Once on board her there was little to see, only a couple of bare masts and a wheel, and an equally forlorn looking deck-house. Yards, canvas, ropes, were all absent. The spirit of adventure, however, was on both boys, and making their way rather gingerly over the slippery deck to the main hatchway, they descended the companion ladder to the passage leading to the cabins and fore-castle. They found the whole place swimming in water, while occasional loud splashes and quick scampering announced the presence of rats.

They had finished exploring all they dared, and were retracing their steps along the passage leading to the companion ladder, when Grant's friend suddenly gasped with surprise and gripped him by the arm, asking sharply, "Whatever was that?"

Grant looked up and there before them in the act of coming down the ladder was a tall man clad in the sort of costume sailors used to wear in the early part of the nineteenth century. The light from above deck falling directly on his face threw it into strong relief. It was that of a middle-aged man with very pronounced features, black curly hair, beard and whiskers, though his cheeks were absolutely colourless.

He came slowly and leisurely down, and advanced straight towards the two boys. As he drew near they instinctively shrank against the wall. He did not seem to notice them, however, but walking on past them, still with the same slow, leisurely tread, he entered one of the cabins they had just explored.

Grant's friend, looking very pale and scared, caught hold of Grant's arm and half dragged him up the companion ladder and on to the deck.

"Did you notice anything peculiar about that man apart from his clothes?" he said, as they stood waiting for the boat which was to bring them to shore.

"I thought it odd that he never once looked at us," Grant replied.

"That's true," his friend observed, "but there was something else besides. His feet *made no sound*. He walked absolutely noiselessly."

"What do you think then?" Grant said, an uncomfortable feeling stealing over him.

"What do I think?" whispered the other boy, casting a terrified glance in the direction of the companion hatchway. "I don't think at all, I'm certain. What we saw was no man at all but a ghost. This old hulk is *haunted*."

The rowboat could not arrive too soon for them.

The day after their strange adventure Grant's friend came running to see him in a rare state of excitement.

"What I told you yesterday," he said, "is perfectly true. That old hulk is haunted, and if you will come with me to the man who sold it to my dad he will tell us all about it."

Grant went with him to a house close to the Victoria Dock where this man lived. He was a very old man, near ninety, but he still retained that kind of breeziness which long association with the sea almost invariably breeds.

The boys then learned from him that he had in fact once sailed in the old ship—he had served his apprenticeship aboard her. He was not at all surprised to hear about the ghost and, in a clear steady voice, told this story to the two boys, which I put down in his own words as Grant described them for me.

"It was a hot, sultry night in the summer of 1825 (*the old man began*). I had been at sea then just over two years, and we were lying at anchor in a small bay a little to the south of Barcelona. The captain and the first mate had gone ashore early in the morning to arrange for a cargo of fruit being shipped on board the following day. When I went below deck at the end of the second dog watch they had not returned, and speculations were rife as to what could have detained them so long. There was another apprentice on board, and we shared a small cabin next to the captain's.

"Well, it didn't take me long to slip off my clothes and tumble into my bunk, for I was very tired, and in a few minutes I was fast asleep. I awoke with a start, to hear in the distance a wild, prolonged scream. It seemed to come from the shore. There was something so harrowing about it that the blood in my veins froze.

"I sat up and called out 'Jack! Did you hear that?'

"'Yes,' my companion, whose name was Jack Weston (he is still alive and director of a big shipping firm) replied. 'I did. It was probably someone being done in by one of those dagos. Murders are as plentiful as blackberries in and around Barcelona, you know. I wonder if the old man and Masters (he was the first mate) are back yet?'

"'I wonder too,' I said, and lying down again I tried to go to sleep. It was a vain effort, however. My thoughts kept going back to that cry and I became full of a strong sense of foreboding. Could it have had anything to do with our captain?

"I got up and going to the porthole looked out. The night was superb. Overhead an ultramarine sky, a full silvery moon and myriads of bright stars; below and on either side, perfectly calm water, glittering and shining like the scales on a fish's back, while in front was a long strip of silver sand bordered by the dark forms of gently nodding firs and beeches, with away in the far distance the dark outlines of heavily wooded mountains. It was the sort of thing one sees in picture postcards and seems too good to be true.

"Well, I stood and gazed at the scene for a long time, and all the while I could hear nothing but the lap, lap of the water against the ship's sides and the creaking and groaning of the idle rudder. Finally, the impulse seizing me to go on deck I yielded

to it, and left the cabin as noiselessly as possible.

"I was in the act of ascending the companion ladder when Captain Gale—that was the name of our skipper—suddenly appeared at the head of the steps and began to descend."

"What did the captain look like?" Grant timidly interrupted to ask the old man.

"What was Captain Gale like? Why, he was a tall man with rather marked features and black hair, beard and whiskers. On this day, however, he looked ghastly pale.

"He came down and when he was close to me, I touched my cap and said, 'Good evening, sir. I am. . . .'

"I was about to add something else but he did not give me time. Without apparently seeing me he walked past and went straight into his cabin, slamming the door to behind him.

"I can hear that slam now.

"Thinking this rather odd but supposing he was vexed about something, I went on deck and going up to the second mate, who was on duty, I said, 'I see the captain's back!'

"The mate stared at me. 'What do you mean?' he said.

"'The captain's back,' I repeated. 'When did he come aboard?'

"The mate's face hardened. 'He hasn't come aboard,' he growled. 'Are you trying to have me on?'

"'No, mister,' I said, and I explained to him how I had just met the captain on the companion ladder.

"I never saw a man look queerer—plainly wondering what I was up to. He stuck out that neither the captain nor the first mate had returned yet, and it ended in our going below deck and knocking at the captain's cabin. There was no reply. We knocked again, and as there was still no response we opened the door and looked in. Not a sign of the captain was to be seen anywhere.

"'You've been fooling me,' the second mate said grimly, and I could see I was for it if I continued to argue. So I went back to my cabin while he resumed duty on deck.

"Next morning there was still no sign of the two missing officers and in the end we were obliged to return to Liverpool without them.

"Their fate was an absolute mystery. The ship, however, was haunted. A ghostly figure, the exact counterpart of Captain Gale, was constantly seen descending the companion ladder and going into the captain's cabin. The crew in consequence were much demoralised and on our reaching port they left in a body. That was how the Sarah Emma first got the reputation for being haunted."

"The Sarah Emma?" Grant exclaimed. "You can't see any name on her now."

"I suppose not," said the old man. "She hasn't had a coat of paint on her for five and twenty years, but that was the name by which she was known when first I sailed in her. She subsequently changed it, not once but many times. And all owing to the ghost."

"Although I stuck to the Sarah Emma, I didn't go to that part of Spain again for several years, not indeed until I was second mate. It then so happened that we came to an anchorage one day in the same bay and pretty well the same spot, and as there was every prospect of our remaining there for some time I obtained leave to spend a day or two ashore."

"When I landed I had no idea where to go or what to do, but after wandering about for some time I eventually decided to penetrate inland and see a little of the scenery that had so captivated me from the ship. After strolling along for some distance I came to a spot where several paths met, and was debating which of them to take when I suddenly saw before me a figure that seemed strangely familiar. It was that of a tall man in sailor's rig. As his back was towards me I could not see his face but from his general appearance I gathered that he was English. Cheered at the sight of a fellow countryman I followed him, and in a few minutes arrived in sight of a small inn."

"He went right up to the front door of it, and then halting, turned slowly round and looked at me. To my amazement it was Captain Gale—and what clinched matters was that he smiled at me."

"Before I could do or say anything, however, he had turned the handle of the door and entered the building."

"Trembling all over with excitement I at once approached the door and knocked. No one came at first, but on my knocking again a woman emerged, and in broken English enquired what I wanted. I told her a night's lodging, adding that I had just seen an old friend of mine enter the house."

"'An old friend of yours?' she replied. 'That is impossible—there is no friend of yours here. There is no one in the house at all but myself.'"

"I told her she was mistaken and that I was quite positive Captain Gale was in the building, as I had just seen him pass through the doorway. She looked a little uneasy, I fancied, at the mention of Captain Gale, but she still emphatically denied there was anyone in the house saving herself."

"Seeing it was useless to argue I changed the subject and asked

her to let me have the best room she could, and ordered a meal."

"Well, nothing of any moment happened till the night. I had gone to my room, but not liking the appearance of the bed, which was a huge fourposter, made use of an armchair instead. I had been in it for perhaps an hour or so, trying to sleep, when I heard footsteps very softly approach my door, and after an interval of several minutes, during which I felt someone was listening, the bed gave a loud creak."

"I at once looked at it and in the moonlight saw to my horror the big canopy on the top slowly commencing to descend. It did not, however, get far, for more footsteps came along the passage outside and it at once stopped. There was then an altercation carried on in low voices, a sudden scuffle, a sharp cry of pain, and a loud thud. Leaping to my feet I rushed to the door and threw it open. Lying on the floor outside was a man whom I recognised at once. It was Masters, the first mate of the Sarah Emma, the man who had so mysteriously disappeared along with the captain several years before."

"He recognised me too, and bidding me kneel down and listen, he made an extraordinary confession."

"Masters said that he and Captain Gale had come to that house, that they had both had the room that had been given to me, that Captain Gale had been murdered, and that he owed his preservation to the fact that not liking the appearance of the bed he had slept in consequence on the floor. He said he was so infuriated with the murderess that he would have killed her offhand, had she not gone on her knees and implored pity."

"This moved him so he had spared her, and in the end she inveigled him into staying with her, and they married. He declared he had been very unhappy, however, as she had the most ungovernable and cruel temper. He said he often had to be away from the house for nights together and he had on more than one occasion suspected her of enticing people into the inn during his absence and murdering them."

"He said on this particular night, returning unexpectedly, he had surprised her in the act and on his remonstrating with her, she had stabbed him."

"This was Masters' tale, and when he had finished it I carried him at his request into the parlour downstairs, and then left him."

"Hurrying to the shore I got into a boat and rowed right away to the Sarah Emma. Nothing was done that night but in the morning the captain, myself and several others of the crew rowed in to Barcelona and reported the matter to the British Consul there."

He at once communicated with the local police, with the result that about a dozen of them accompanied us to the inn, only to find it deserted. The wounded man and the woman had both disappeared, and what subsequently became of them I was never able to find out.

"As for the Sarah Emma, she still continued to be haunted by the ghost of Captain Gale, and from what you boys have told me she still is."

So ended the old seaman's story in this account told me by Mr. Grant at the Plymouth hotel, a strangely involved tale which he assured me could be verified from many sources including his boyhood friend in Liverpool; descendants of the old man, who had heard the same story from his lips; and more particularly from the actual records of the ill-starred Sarah Emma and from others who had sailed in her.

THE POOL OF HORRORS

THERE is no pool of water in England which has been the scene of more suicides and murders, and consequently, which is more sinister in reputation, than that known as the Suicide Pool in Epping Forest. Among the many weird things that are said to occur at this pool every now and then is the ghostly rehearsal of any impending tragedy, and it was a rumour such as this that prompted me to spend a night by the pool.

When I arrived at the scene of my vigil, the rich autumn moonlight gilded the surface of the water where, in places, it was free from the shadows of the neighbouring trees. If only those trees could speak, I thought, what dark secrets they could tell.

I was thinking then of the mystery concerning Emma Morgan, a pretty young servant who was last seen alive walking through Woodford, Essex, in the direction of Epping Forest with a baby in her arms.

Emma had been in the service of a wealthy Tottenham tradesman who had dismissed her because, although a married woman, she had encouraged numerous lovers, and by one of them had had the child. Being homeless, for her husband would not take her back, no enquiries were made about her, and probably never would have been, had not her body and that of the child been found not, strange to say, in the pool, but close to it.

Both Emma and her baby had been most horribly murdered, and their fiendish assailant was never brought to book.

I thought of this and other tragedies as I stood on the edge of the pool, peering into its dark, still water and listening to the rustling of the wind through the half naked branches of the neighbouring trees.

Every now and then a dog from afar off howled and a night bird wailed, and once, from close behind me, came a noise so like

a cough that I swung round fully expecting to see someone, but although in the moonlight everything around me stood out clearly and distinctly no one was to be seen.

Soon after this I heard a faint, feeble cry, like that of a child in pain. Again I swung round, and again I saw nothing. Then, from a distance, came the sound of a strange tramping, the steady march of a host of people. On and on towards the pool came this tramping, solemn and in step, but although I heard it distinctly I could see no one.

Then, within a few feet of me, the tramping suddenly ceased, and I visualised very clearly a number of black-robed figures standing with bowed heads, supporting in their midst a coffin, and apparently waiting for something to happen. A noise from near at hand made me look round, and though I still saw no physical presence, my mental vision brought to me the image of a young man with a white, evil face. He was dressed in a grey suit and he was bending over the body of a woman.

Picking up the body, he came staggering with it to the pool and threw the body into the still, gleaming water. For some seconds he stood scowling at the body as it floated on the surface. Then, muttering angrily to himself, he walked away.

Directly he was out of sight, I again heard the slow, measured tramping and sensed that the procession of black-robed figures had moved on.

I waited till all was silent again and then came away.

The experience of the night was so vivid and puzzling that I described it to an old inhabitant of Epping. In my description of the woman he was particularly interested, and told me that, according to newspaper cuttings he had, my account of her tallied exactly with that of a woman who had been murdered and thrown into the pool by an unknown person in the summer of 1887.

The same man then told me of a strange experience of his own.

He said that early one morning, shortly before the first world war, when taking a walk in the neighbourhood of the Suicide Pool, he had been horrified to see the body of a man lying face downwards in a ditch, and standing by it a stout, stockily built, shabbily dressed man with a gun.

He was still more horrified when, just as he was about to approach and question the man, both he and the body in the ditch disappeared.

The incident, however, was more or less explained, he thought, by the fact that two days later, the body of an ex-N.C.O. was actually found lying face downwards in the same ditch. The

circumstances plainly pointed to murder, but no one was ever apprehended and the man's death remains one of the many unsolved mysteries of Epping Forest.

THE WEEPING TOMB OF KILMALLOCK

IN the south-west of Ireland, in County Limerick, lie the ruins of what was once the imposing Abbey of Kilmallock. At the end of one of the ruined aisles is a heap of stones, all that is left of the tomb of Sir Maurice Fitzgerald, better known as the White Knight.

They are called the Weeping Stones, and there is a remarkable story associated with them, one embracing both tradition and fact.

Fitzgerald, a fierce warrior figure of the Middle Ages, lived in the grim Castle of Michelstown, in County Cork, and earned the title of the White Knight from the suit of very light armour that he wore. He was not of ancient Irish descent and in fact his connection with Ireland was of short duration, but he had a great reputation as a soldier and much of the land in the south belonged either to him or to his numerous relatives.

Although a generally hard man he had one soft spot, and that was for his son Edmund, a tall, handsome youth.

Fitzgerald had great aims for Edmund, whom he wanted to marry either the daughter of a powerful English nobleman, or the daughter of one of the famous Irish chieftains of the north. He was most anxious for his son not only to live up to the fighting reputation of the family but to increase it.

Edmund, however, had little ambition along these lines. He was of a dreamy, sensitive, retiring nature, and would far sooner have been a monk or hermit than a soldier.

One fine summer evening Edmund mounted his chestnut charger and rode off, as usual, in the direction of the Kilworth Mountains, which were one of his favourite haunts. Lost in reverie he rode slowly on, plunging deeper and deeper into a region which at last became totally unknown to him.

Suddenly his horse shied and all but unseated him. When he had calmed the animal Edmund saw that he had been riding along a narrow path through a dense and gloomy wood. Standing under the wide-spreading branches of a giant elm tree was the figure of a woman. She was short and bent, and clothed from head to foot in black.

She laughed, and, thrusting her head forward, said in a harsh, man-like voice, "Do you not know me? They call me the Witch of Kilworth, and I am on my way to the Hole in the Rocks to see how the Blue Lights burn. Do you want to know your fate and how long you have to live, Edmund Fitzgerald?"

"How do you know my name, old woman?" he asked.

"I am in league with the Powers that rule man's future," the hag replied, "and if you will come with me I will show you yours."

Edmund hesitated. The Church forbade him to have anything to do with superstition and magic, but his love of adventure was strong. The hag laughed again at his indecision.

"Fear not," she said, "I have nought toward you—at least as yet—but friendly feelings. Follow where I lead and no harm will befall you."

Stepping out from under the tree she set off along a path that ran at right angles to the one he had been following. Crossing himself several times in rapid succession, Edmund turned his horse's head and followed closely at her heels.

On and on she led him, over hill, across torrents and through rock-strewn defiles, until at length they emerged into a small, grassy open space confronting a high, gaunt cliff, in the face of which was a black cavern.

"See!" she cried, waving a skinny hand in the direction of the cave. "The lights—the Candles of Fate. Come and look—yours is among them."

She advanced again as she spoke, and Edmund now saw a number of mysterious blue lights, like great candle flames, flickering in the mouth of the cavern. Keeping close behind his guide he followed her to the entrance to the grotto, and then descending from his horse he went into the cave after her.

He could feel presences all round him. Instinct told him that the candles he saw floating apparently in mid-air and emitting the bluish-green flames were, in reality, supported by phantoms. They—the candles—surrounded him on all sides, some being quite tall and seemingly just lighted, and others, very, very short; in fact, almost burned out.

"There is one for every person in this country," the hag said,

"and the height of them denotes the number of years each man, woman and child has still to live. That is yours!"

She pointed to a candle that was only about a quarter burned.

"You see, you have many years to live yet. Satisfactory, is it not? But crow not, fair gentleman, for sorrow will come to you before long, to such an extent that, times without number, you will wish that candle but a guttering wick. Now look!"

Turning round, she pointed towards the mouth of the grotto. Edmund obeyed, and drew back in wonder, for gone was the scenery he had last looked on before entering the cavern. Facing him now and sweeping horizonward was a great drift of solemn pines, the like of which for size he had never seen either in County Cork or in County Limerick. Or so, at least, it seemed to him in that hour of mystery.

Far behind the trees the evening sky had chilled to a deep wash of blood red, across which lay a long bar of black cloud. Under the trees was a high grey-stone wall, in the centre of which was a wooden door studded with brass-headed nails.

As Edmund stared at this door it opened, and a young girl in a loose flowing garment of white appeared. Stepping forward she advanced towards the grotto, the moonbeams throwing into strongest relief her face and figure. She was tall and slim, and the extraordinary beauty of her features was enhanced by a mass of bright gold hair that fell about her neck and shoulders.

But it was her eyes that took his attention most. They were wide and blue, blue as the waters of Killarney, and in the moonlight they shone with a starlike lustre. She smiled as he looked at her—then shuddered, and gazing piteously up at him from under the long lashes which had lain momentarily upon her pale cheeks, held out her hands, as if inviting him to take hold of them.

Edmund sprang forward and was about to reach out to her when the hag behind gave a harsh cry, and the girl and all the tableau in the background at once vanished.

"Son of the Knight of Michelstown," she said, "she whom you saw is your fate, and you will find her within the grey walls of Kilmallock Abbey."

"Her name, old woman? How is she called?" Edmund demanded.

There was no response, only a blinding flash. He staggered forward and, when his vision cleared, found himself standing outside the grotto by the side of his horse. He peered into the cavern, which was now in total darkness, and shouted to the old woman. There was no reply, and yielding to a sudden terror,

Edmund vaulted into his saddle and rode off.

For the next two or three days he had constant mental pictures of the beautiful girl in white, and his desire to put his experience to the test and see if it was only a dream at length became so great that he decided to visit the Abbey of Kilmallock. At first he thought of making the trip alone, but the distance being rather far, and the roads infested with enemies of his clan, he eventually took with him one of his father's retainers, a man he believed he could trust to hold his tongue.

They made the journey without mishap, and when he arrived at a bend in the road that led right to Kilmallock, Edmund saw confronting him, almost within a stone's throw, a great sweep of giant pines, and in the front of them a long grey wall with a big nail-studded door in the centre of it.

He recognised the tableau in an instant; it was the exact counterpart of what he had seen in the old hag's cave. While he was staring at it, the door in the wall suddenly opened and a procession of girls, all in white, began slowly to approach the spot where he and his henchman were stationed. As they drew nearer he eagerly scanned each face, and to his great joy saw in one of the girls who walked in the very last row of all, the living likeness of his vision-girl of the golden locks.

Not daring to reveal himself, for several nuns accompanied the procession, he waited with his retainer till the girls had all returned to the seclusion of the abbey. He then gave thought as to how he could discover who the fair girl was, and exchange word with her. For hours he lingered in sight of the building but could devise no feasible scheme, and he was beginning to give way to despair when the door opened again and an old crone came out, carrying an earthenware pitcher.

He approached her, and the gift of a little silver brought him the necessary information. The crone told him that the girl with the golden locks was Elgiva O'Rourke, daughter of the Prince of Brefni.

This was dismaying news, for of all the enemies of the Fitzgeralds of Michelstown, the O'Rourkes were by far the most formidable, and there was none his father hated with a fiercer bitterness. Indeed, Edmund feared for the girl's safety should his father discover where she was, and he warned his retainer that on no account must he repeat a word of what had been said.

Thinking now only of the girl's welfare, Edmund resolved to return home and visit the spot again in the near future, but alone. Accordingly, the two men rode off.

All might have gone well had it not been for the frailty of the retainer. One day, when under the influence of some of the good vintage of the White Knight's cellars, he allowed his tongue to wag a little too freely and disclosed the secret of Elgiva O'Rourke's whereabouts.

A meanly disposed page, eager for a reward, reported what he had heard to the White Knight, and, full of wrath at discovering one of the tribe he hated being so close as within a score or so miles of him, Maurice Fitzgerald rode for Kilmallock and demanded that Elgiva be handed over to him.

The Abbess yielded; unless she wanted the whole place pulled down about her ears she could scarcely have done otherwise, for Maurice had a considerable force at his back.

Surprisingly, however, when once he had Elgiva in his power he did not treat her badly, at least not then. He took her back with him to the Castle of Michelstown and entrusted her to the keeping of certain of his female retainers.

Elgiva's presence there soon became known to Edmund, who, waiting his opportunity, at length made himself known to her and passionately declared his love. Thereafter the lovers used to meet clandestinely in a wood adjoining the castle.

The White Knight inevitably got to know of this and was secretly making arrangements to have Elgiva sent away when Edmund forestalled him by eloping with Elgiva. He rode with her, accompanied by one faithful retainer, to the Abbey of Kilmallock, and on arriving there, implored the Abbess to secure the services of a priest, so that they could be married at once. The Abbess, though she feared the anger of the White Knight, was overcome by Edmund's entreaties and sent a messenger for a cleric.

They were actually in the middle of the marriage ceremony when into the abbey, sword in hand, burst the infuriated Maurice Fitzgerald. A spy had informed him of his son's flight.

Shouting out his hatred of the O'Rourkes, Fitzgerald rushed at the terrified girl and, before she had time to avoid him, stabbed her in the breast. She sank to the floor and, fixing her eyes on her murderer, gasped, "For this cruel deed of yours, Heaven will punish you! Your doom will be to weep, to weep and weep—even *after you are dead!*"

She said no more, but, with a tender glance at Edmund, expired.

The anger of the White Knight did not, however, end there. He sent the sorrow-stricken Edmund, under strong escort, to a remote spot on his lands and kept him there for years, while he

had the faithful retainer put in a small chasm or cleft between two rocks and left there to starve to death.

Only in recent times, when the foundations of the castle of the late Earl of Kingston were being laid, the skeleton of this wretched man was found in the exact position tradition had described. He had died, so it was affirmed, in the most dreadful agony.

But the malicious acts of the White Knight were not to pass unchallenged. As soon as the O'Rourkes heard of Elgiva's murder, they gathered and rode against Maurice Fitzgerald, and though they themselves were almost entirely destroyed, they inflicted terrible losses on the White Knight's followers.

Other misfortunes came in their wake, and to the day of his death the White Knight knew no peace. He was buried in a splendid tomb in Kilmallock Abbey, and the very next day the doom pronounced by the dying Elgiva was found to be at work. A kinsman of the White Knight visiting the tomb found on its surface many spots of what, apparently, was water, and the same thing happening the following day he mentioned the occurrence to the then Abbess, and very soon the whole county got to hear of it.

The phenomenon continued. No matter how fine or dry the day, there was always moisture on the White Knight's marble effigy, and there was no accounting for its presence there, saving on the basis of the supernatural.

Unquestionably, those who witnessed the phenomenon argued, and they were many, Elgiva's word had come true—the White Knight, even though dead, was still lamenting, with bitter tears, his foul crime.

The phenomenon went on through long centuries, until some years ago, when the tomb was broken open and practically demolished by an avaricious soldier, who dreamed several times in succession that it contained a treasure. As a matter of fact, it contained only some bones, a sword, spurs, and some broken pieces of armour.

But still the heap of stones that was once the White Knight's tomb continued to weep its strange tears.

THE TERROR OF PITLOCHRY

SOME years after investigating the hauntings of Scotland I was visiting friends in London, when during conversation one of the women present referred briefly to a curious adventure she had had with a ghost near the village of Pitlochry, in Perthshire.

She was encouraged, of course, to describe the incident, and the following story is given as nearly as I can in her own words.

"We had been out for a carriage drive in Killiecrankie one afternoon, and were returning home somewhat later than we had anticipated. When we were about halfway on the road the horses started very violently as if scared at something, and a lady sitting beside me exclaimed, 'Good heavens!—what's that?'

"I looked in the direction she indicated and saw there, standing on a strip of grass, a very tall figure clad in white, with a kind of white cowl or hood drawn low over its features. It stood quite still for some seconds, seemingly intent on watching us, and then suddenly sprang forward and came racing after us with long bounds.

"The horses, as though sensing some horrid presence, simply flew, and we had to hold on to our seats like grim death, to escape being thrown into the road. I was terrified and I think everyone in the wagonette was terrified too. The figure kept waving its long arms in the air as it ran, and I expected every minute it would catch us up.

"However, just as it got within reach of us, the horses gave a frantic leap forward and shot well ahead of it. To our intense relief the figure then stopped and stood motionless in the roadway until a sudden turn in the road hid it from view.

"When we had sufficiently recovered ourselves to speak, we asked the driver if he could give us any explanation of what had happened, and he shook his head.

" 'No,' he said, 'I can only tell you that every few years that same figure is to be seen hovering about the spot where you saw it just now, and that if it touches anyone, it is said, that person dies within a twelvemonth. I thank God, however, I have never known that to happen.' "

The woman's story was highly interesting to me in that it compared exactly with an experience of my own on this roadway near the Pass of Killiecrankie. While cycling home to the hamlet of Tummel Bridge I also encountered a tall spectral figure clad from head to foot in white. It bounded swiftly towards me and, too unnerved for further investigation, I had to pedal madly in order to escape its grasp.

The woman and I compared notes and agreed that it was undoubtedly one and the same ghost we had both seen. But what kind of ghost it was, whether a spirit of the dead or elemental—that is to say, a spirit that had never inhabited a human body—we could not decide.

In order to find out more about it we arranged to revisit Pitlochry and the ghost-ridden road, separately of course, and afterwards to meet again and describe what, if anything, occurred.

Sad to say, however, this plan was destined never to materialise, for my partner in it died almost immediately after our pact. Had the hooded figure that day actually succeeded in briefly touching her? It left me wondering, though of course without decisive evidence this can only be the merest speculation.

Another incident connected with Pitlochry happened to me on the day I was leaving the village after my earlier visit there. I was standing in the hall of the hotel, waiting for the bus that was to take me to the station, when a fellow guest who had sometimes sat next to me at meals came up to me, looking very pale and troubled.

"I've just had an experience with the supernatural," he said, "and I must tell it to you because I'm very much upset about it, and I know you will not scoff at me."

He then proceeded to tell me that as he went downstairs to breakfast that morning someone who appeared to be in a great hurry ran by him and, on reaching the foot of the stairs, turned and looked back at him.

"To my intense surprise and horror," he went on, "the face I saw was my own, and I realised that the figure now confronting me was my double, or what you in Ireland call a 'fetch.' As I stood and stared at it, too terrified and awestruck to utter a sound,

it turned again and walking across the hall went into one of the rooms.

"I followed it at once, for, although terrified, I was fascinated by it, but I found the room into which it had gone was empty, and there was no exit saving the doorway through which I had seen it pass."

"Has it any significance?" I asked.

"Yes," my companion answered slowly, "it is a sure premonition of death—my own death."

And he was right. He died within the next fortnight.

While still in Scotland I chanced to meet a very intelligent lady from Pitlochry, a Mrs. Grant, who related to me in plain, matter-of-fact Scots fashion an unsettling experience which she had had years before. She was not a woman likely to romance and I firmly believe the accuracy of the story she told me.

This centred round a shocking murder which was committed towards the end of the seventeenth century, when a lady by the name of Hays was waylaid and done to death in the picturesque glen which lies behind a ruined castle in Peeblesshire. From that time onward, it had been stated, her ghost had been seen haunting the spot.

Mrs. Grant told me that in the summer of 1886, she was taking an evening's walk along the road leading through the glen. Nothing disturbed her until the sound of a deep groan, coming from behind her, caused her to turn in some consternation.

At first she was unable to see anything untoward. Then, gradually there seemed to loom before her a greenish yellow light of a spherical shape, roughly about the size of a large melon. It seemed to be hovering on the top of a dyke skirting one side of the roadway.

Fascinated, and yet afraid, she looked at this remarkable apparition which gradually seemed to resolve itself into a head—the head of a woman with long black hair, adorned with lace lappets, or what was formerly known as "perlin."

Strong moonlight rendered the features uncannily clear, and Mrs. Grant saw that they were those of a person not of this earth. For a moment she believed that a corpse had risen from the grave.

Terror struck into her soul and she stood riveted where she had halted. As though fascinated by the hypnotic, unwinking eye of a snake she stared, her senses in a whirl. Then, with a tremendous effort of will, she backed away a few paces. The head advanced along the top of the dyke a few feet. She stepped back again—and the head followed, glowing sinister in the cold moonlight.

She tried to scream, but the steady progress of the death's head had paralysed her vocal chords. The uncanny silence also affected her nerves but she continued to retreat along the road.

And so they went on in a procession of two—with the death's head sometimes gaining a yard, then Mrs. Grant spurting and making the gap between them wider. Suddenly, at the termination of the wall, she saw that the head, which had appeared to be without body and gliding along the top of the stones of its own accord, was, in reality, attached to a filmy, wraith-like figure.

This apparition floated right across the road towards the poor woman, who became faint again and almost collapsed. To her unspeakable horror she then saw the lashless eyelids slowly opening in the hideous face. At this she swooned completely.

She regained consciousness to discover no sign whatever of the spectre, and stumbled home with the resolution fixed in her mind that never would she cross that way again.

Mrs. Grant told me that she was not the only one to have had this dread experience, a man living in the neighbourhood having also seen—and hastily retreated from—the corpse-like floating head.

THE STAIRCASE AND THE PIT

AN old friend of mine, a doctor, bought himself a practice within almost a stone's throw of Camberwell Green, in south-east London. On more than one occasion afterwards when I saw him he seemed disturbed about something, and finally one day—it was in the early 1920s—he decided to unburden himself and tell me the following story, imploring me to keep it to myself at that time—"because it wouldn't do for me to let it get mooted abroad that I believed in ghosts, a doctor is commonly thought to be above such weaknesses."

One night (*he began*), soon after I came into tenancy here, I was ascending the stairs to the first floor which you, O'Donnell, came up just now to this drawing-room. It was late, for I had been studying, and the clock in the hall pointed to half-past one. I had almost arrived at the top of the first flight—I was, in fact, on the seventh stair—when suddenly I felt myself slip. The stairs somehow seemed to disappear from beneath my feet, and in their stead I was acutely conscious of a terrible funnel-shaped hole, of hideous darkness and the most prodigious depths.

I appeared to be on the very brink of it—an inch or two more and I must inevitably go sliding down a steep incline which ended abruptly in the most frightful pit. In an agony of terror I clutched the banisters, and as I did so I distinctly felt a current of cold, clammy air fan my nostrils.

I called out, and, on my housekeeper coming out of her room with a lighted candle, the sensation ceased. The staircase at once became normal again, and I was able to continue my ascent. I explained my conduct by saying I had been seized with vertigo, and my housekeeper at once fetched brandy.

"You are like a sheet," she said. "I have never seen you look so ill before," and she made me swallow half a tumbler of my visitors' best.

The following day it was her turn to give me an alarm. I had just come back from a long round of visits, when I heard a thud, as I thought, in the hall. I ran out of my study to see what it was, and found the housekeeper lying on the mat at the foot of the staircase in a dead faint. When she had recovered sufficiently she told me what had happened.

"I was coming down the stairs," she said, "when I suddenly heard footsteps behind me. 'Annie,' I called out, thinking it was the maid, but there was no reply. I called again, but still there was no answer. I then became conscious of a cold, horrible smell like that of a charnel-house. It blew past me down the stairs and seemed to fill the whole house.

"At the same time the steps caught me up and someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned round—and saw the face of a skeleton peering at me from under a big black hood. Then I fainted."

And that, my friend (*the doctor continued*) was all my housekeeper was able to tell me. She was so badly shaken, what with the fright and the tumble—she fell down at least four stairs—that I kept her in bed two or three days and then sent her for a change of air to Bognor. After that nothing of any note happened for some time, maybe a month.

The two servants were the next to have an experience. They, the cook and housemaid, were sitting in the kitchen one evening when I was out, playing patience. Something had gone wrong with the gas, and they had to have candles. Not content with two, the cook lit three, whereupon the housemaid rebuked her, remarking that to have three candles burning at the same time was a sure way of courting disaster, since it invariably attracted something evil.

"Why, look there," she said, pointing at one of the candles. "See, there is a winding-sheet already, and it is pointing in your direction."

The cook turned pale. "What does that mean, Annie?" she exclaimed, staring at the candle as if fascinated. "It means—" Annie began, but she did not finish, for at that instant there was a loud noise from somewhere overhead, as though a great weight had suddenly been dropped on the floor.

"Lord, have mercy on us!" the cook cried. "Whatever can that be?"

"Let's go and look," the housemaid replied. "It sounded like a pile of books. It can't be the master's bookcase, surely."

"It didn't sound to me like that," the cook answered.

"What did it sound like, then?" Annie said.

"Why," the cook replied, with a shudder, "it was more the sound of a big box—or a coffin."

They bravely took a candle each and, having searched the ground floor, were going up the hall stairs when a sudden gust of wind blew both candles out and left them in the dark. They then heard a number of footsteps, like a procession of people in bare feet, come down the stairs from the very top of the house, cross the landing, and begin to descend the stairway at which they stood.

They told me they saw nothing, but were conscious of countless presences passing close to them, and of a smell like to nothing saving the smell of a newly opened grave.

When I returned home soon afterwards I found them still standing on the stairs, too petrified with terror to move hand or feet. I relit their candles and we made a thorough tour of the house, but there were no signs of any ghostly visitors, and nothing as far as I could see had been disturbed in any of the rooms. However, the two women that night both gave notice to leave.

You might wonder (*my friend said*) why I did not then decide to clear out myself. Well, I hadn't the time, the practice kept me much too busy. Besides, there was nowhere else for me to go. Unfurnished houses of the type I needed were practically unobtainable in this district.

After the cook and housemaid left, I invited two friends to do a sitting here, and they brought an alleged medium with them. The medium started seeing things at once, but they did not correspond in the slightest degree with any of the phenomena that any of us had experienced. She told us that the spirit of someone who had been murdered in this house about a hundred years ago had appeared to her, and that after conversing with her it had promised it would never come again, and that there would be no more disturbances.

For the next two or three days nothing did happen, but on the fourth day I again had an experience. As before, it was on the stairs. This time, however, it was in broad daylight: I was coming down to breakfast, and had reached the second stair of the second flight leading from the landing to the hall (that would be the seventh stair of the first flight going up), when I suddenly felt myself slipping. Just as before, in an agony of mind, I caught hold of the banisters and was conscious of the same dreadful funnel-shaped pit yawning to receive me.

More than that. Something seemed to rise up out of it and

clutch hold of me. It did not feel altogether like an arm, but more like a tentacle—cold, clammy, and pulpy. I tried to shake it off, but without avail. It clung to me all the tighter, and had I not gripped the banisters with the strength born of despair I must have been dragged down the sloping brink of the pit into the black horror beyond.

The struggle seemed to go on for an eternity, and all the while I was fighting the thing, with the sweat pouring from my face and every other part of my body, I was conscious of a variety of trifling happenings in the hall and house. I heard, for example, someone rap at the back door and the housekeeper answer it and say, "No, we don't want any stationery. We have already bought six packets. Don't come again."

Then there was a slight pause, interrupted by a rattle of fire-irons, after which the milkman ran up the steps and dumped down his can by the front door. A dog in the road started barking. They were common enough sounds, and I had heard them all many times before, but now they appeared to be endowed with the most endearing properties, and to form a highly essential part of my life.

I cannot describe to you all I endured, and it would be impossible for you to realise it without having had a similar experience yourself. To see everything that indicated life, the life with which I was so familiar all around me, and then to be dragged away from it all and hurled down, down, down into that awful yawning pit.

I struggled frantically against the grip of the tentacle but to my unspeakable alarm it gradually forced me to relinquish my hold. Finger after finger lost its hold on the banisters, until at last only one remained there. It was the middle finger of the right hand—I shall always feel a particular affection for it—and it had more strength and tenacity in it that morning than all the other fingers put together. But at last this also gave way and the banisters began to recede from me.

I do not think, O'Donnell (*the doctor said*) any lost soul could have suffered more than I did then. I am not exaggerating, but it was all so horribly realistic. The staircase, I tell you, was no longer beneath me, nothing was beneath me but the slippery, sloping brink of that awful black hole, and as I commenced sliding towards it, I saw certain of its horrors with the most damning distinctness.

Its sides were composed of black rock, with, here and there, deep vein-like fissures and growths of what appeared to be

monstrous fungi. As I slid further down, the shadow from the brink fell all around me like some nightmarish pall, and the interior of the house, with all its familiar objects, was at once obliterated. I tried to shut my eyes to hide the vision, but I could not. Some all-compelling power forced me to keep them open.

Nearer and nearer the precipitous sides of the pit drew, until at last I arrived on the very edge. I made a strenuous effort to keep my foothold, to dig my heels into the hard slippery soil, but the tentacle-like arm that still held me urged me on, and I finally plunged forward into space.

The next thing I was conscious of was a voice which I did not recognise at first, asking me if anything was the matter. I stared around me, and, instead of the black frowning horrors of the pit, I saw the bright walls of the house and the worried face of the housekeeper. I hadn't taken the plunge after all, but was still standing on the stairs, holding on to the banisters like grim death.

(Here the doctor paused, and I asked an obvious question).

No, it was not a dream *(he replied)*. How could it have been, at that hour and in that place? Some people might say it was merely an impression, but to me it was an experience, awful in its intensity.

The next time I went up the stairs happened to be late that night, and I took care to avoid treading on the seventh stair. Nothing happened. In the morning, when I came down to breakfast, I again avoided that particular stair, and nothing again happened. So, said I to myself, the secret of the pit phenomenon, at any rate, lies in the seventh stair, and, that being so, I will have it up.

I did so, but could discover nothing that in any way explained the mystery.

Several weeks then passed without anything of moment occurring, and then came the unexpected. An aunt of mine suddenly took it into her head to pay me a visit. She came on a Saturday, and I quite forgot to warn her about the staircase.

While I was sitting in my consulting room on the Sunday morning, poring over a case that was causing me considerable anxiety, my aunt burst in with a face white as chalk.

"What on earth's the matter, Aunt?" I said. "Are you ill?"

"No," she gasped, sinking into a chair and half-closing her eyes. "I have just had a fright. You never told me this house was haunted."

"Haunted!" I exclaimed, trying to look astonished. "Why, you don't mean to tell me you believe in ghosts?"

"I didn't a short while ago," she said very seriously, "but I do now. Listen. After you had had breakfast you left me in the dining-room, didn't you? Well, I sat there for a few minutes reading the Bible, and then I went into the hall with the intention of going to my room to dress for church. Your staircase is steep, John, and I have to mount it slowly. When I came to the last stair but one in the first flight—"

"The seventh stair," I interrupted her.

"Yes," she replied, "I suppose it would be about the seventh stair—I ran against something."

"Against something?"

"Yes," she said, undeterred. "I collided with what felt like a living person standing on the stair. It gave me such a start that I turned round and ran downstairs again, and on reaching the bottom I looked up."

"Although I did not actually see anything, I got a very vivid impression that a man was standing there—there on the seventh stair. He was quite six feet in height, with red hair and a very white face. He was staring, not at me but at something directly beneath him, and there was (here my aunt shivered violently) a very great terror in his eyes."

"He seemed to be on the stairs for several minutes—I was too fascinated to move—and then he vanished, quite suddenly."

That, O'Donnell *(my friend the doctor said)* was my aunt's story, but there is a sequel to it. Some days after she had left me, I received a caller who introduced himself as Mr. K., brother of a former tenant.

"I took the liberty of calling on you," Mr. K. said, "owing to a rumour I heard to the effect that this house was haunted. My brother was an early tenant here. The house had only recently been built when he came to it—he is now a very old man—and there was, as far as I know, nothing wrong with it then."

I told Mr. K. your theory, O'Donnell, that new houses may be just as badly haunted as old ones, because all sorts of things may have happened in the past on the site of the house, and he agreed, adding, however, that from what he had been able to gather the site of this house had no particular history.

He then told me something which greatly interested me. He said that when he called on his brother in this house one morning, he found him on the stairs in the hall reading a letter he had just received from China. It was from a friend there, and contained

news of the death of Charles, his brother's only son, a youngster of barely twenty. He was a victim of plague, and had been buried in a huge pit just outside the town where he had been living.

"My brother was absolutely devoted to Charles," Mr. K. told me, "and from that hour he was never the same. He began having delusions, and imagining he saw before him the most terrible pit, full of frightful things. Finally, he became so bad we had to have him put under care and he is still in an asylum."

I asked Mr. K. what his brother was like, and he replied, "He is a tall man, and despite his extreme age, his hair is still red—very red."

I later, on some medical pretext, visited the place where this old man was confined and spoke to him, but could extract nothing from him; only some incoherent mutterings about his son. After my visit, however, all the trouble in this house ceased.

O'Donnell, that's the whole case. Do you think it possible that the hauntings were due to the workings of this poor demented man's brain—that his thoughts actually took shape here? Or was it all a coincidence, and the phenomena experienced on the staircase owed its origin to some much more remote cause?

*

I could not then give my doctor friend a satisfactory answer to his questions, and not even now, in the light of later experience, do I feel able confidently to give an explanation for the strange affair and the sudden end to the hauntings. Many cases do remain a puzzle and this is one of them.

THE CANAL TORSO MYSTERY

IN 1935 I was asked by the editor of a well known London weekly journal to spend a night on the banks of the Grand Union Canal at Brentford, where the torso of a man had been found a year previously, as the canal was rumoured to be haunted.

Two legs found in a parcel in a train at Waterloo Station were believed to belong to the torso, but after many months the crime was still unsolved.

Wanting to learn all I could about the case before I held my night's vigil on the canal, I went to the lost property office at Waterloo Station and questioned the man in charge. He said that one day the previous year a cleaner found a parcel under the seat of a third-class carriage and brought it to the office. It was tied loosely with string. The official on duty opened the parcel, and in it were disclosed two bare human legs.

As the two men stared in horror at the legs the toes of one of them seemed to waggle. The cleaner was so terrified that he bolted and never came near the lost property office again.

The legs had been very crudely severed.

My informant could tell me little more, so I then made my way out to Brentford. The night I chose for my vigil was fine. The stretch of canal where the torso had been found was near a railway; there had been much rain and pools had collected on the banks of the canal, making them muddy and slippery. Viewed in the evening light the canal and its surroundings looked dismal and uninviting to say the least.

I was walking along a path at the side of the railway when I met a man who asked what my business was there. I explained to him that I was a journalist and was quite unaware that I was trespassing. He was very civil, and I chatted with him about the torso mystery for several minutes.

He told me he had heard that the police had their suspicions about a certain man, but that they could not get sufficient evidence to arrest him. This I had already heard. My informant went on to say that he had heard that jealousy was thought to have been the motive for the murder; that it was the same old tale of a man making love to a married woman; in such a case one of the men has not infrequently to go, and in this instance it was not the husband.

He pointed out to me the spot where the torso was found. It was marked with a stake.

After he had left I walked on to the towpath, where I met a young bargeman. He told me that he had once seen the body of a woman that had been found in the canal not far from where the torso was discovered, and it was a horrible sight. His detailed description of what he had seen was not comforting, faced as I was with the prospect of spending all night by the canal, and to make it worse he said he did not expect I should meet anyone when it was dark, as few cared to go near that part of the canal in consequence of the murder and the rumour it had acquired of being badly haunted.

When he had gone I paced up and down the towpath for hour after hour, and as he had forecast I did not meet anyone. With the waning light came the evening shadows, and very queer some of them looked. The branches of the trees that lined one side of the path assumed strange shapes. The gloom of the trees, the dark water of the canal, the utter silence and loneliness affected my spirits, and, now and then, I felt inclined to abandon my vigil. I forced myself, however, to keep my post, occasionally resting against a tree.

For a while I stood on a bridge and peered into the water beneath, wondering if it contained some such awful body as the bargeman had described. I could well imagine such a spot being haunted. I had left the bridge and was drawing near the staked spot when I fancied that I saw a tall white figure on the far side of the canal. In the fitful light I could not determine its sex. It vanished abruptly.

A few minutes later on turning round I was startled to see the figure approaching me. I now got the impression that it was a woman in a white or light dress. It vanished suddenly and inexplicably when it was within a few yards of me.

I did not see it again. During the remainder of my vigil I saw nothing definitely ghostly but I felt at times the near proximity of a supernatural entity. The darkness, silence and solitude,

coupled with the knowledge of the gruesome bodies that had been found in the canal, were sufficient to stir the imagination and generate illusions in people less imaginative and sensitive than myself. I realised this, and yet was convinced that what I had experienced was not wholly fanciful but that there were ample grounds for the rumours of the canal banks being haunted.

I was not sorry when the dawn broke and my long vigil ended.

HAUNTED CHURCHES

IN 1873 Mary Anne Cotton was sentenced to death at Durham Assizes after being charged with poisoning her fourth husband and four children. She was strongly suspected of poisoning three more husbands and at least 12 more children.

The case created a great sensation in Durham. Mary Cotton's appearance, with her rather long face, thick nose and hard brown eyes was not prepossessing, yet there must have been something about her, a sinister magnetism, to attract men.

After her execution and burial there were reports that the local churchyard where some of her victims were buried was haunted by their ghosts.

A postman named Barber had a harrowing experience. He was returning home from a party late on the evening of Cotton's execution, and as he was passing the alleged haunted graveyard of the Old Rectory the shrouded figure of a dead child glided out of it. Terrified, Barber ran. The ghost pursued him.

On reaching the cottage where he lived, Barber locked and bolted the door. He heard a clicking of the garden gate, and the shrouded ghost entered the cottage, passing through the closed door. Scared out of his wits Barber raced up the staircase. The ghost followed him. He rushed into his bedroom and locked the door. The ghost did not enter the room—he heard it moving in the adjacent room and he and his wife went and barricaded themselves in the parlour.

For a time they heard the ghost walking about. Then, suddenly, there was a terrific crash. Panicked, they tore out of the cottage to the house of one of their friends.

A young man in the house who scoffed at the idea of ghosts went to the cottage, saw the shrouded figure and fled. Finally an old woman who had had experiences with ghosts went to the cottage and persuaded the phantom to depart.

For a long time afterwards people shunned the old churchyard.

Another postman was pursued by a church apparition. He was on his round one afternoon with letters in a lonely lane near Garstang, in Lancashire, when a tall figure with a death's head, clad in a winding sheet, suddenly emerged from under a tree and confronted him. Dropping his bag of letters the postman took to his heels.

He could hear the figure padding after him till he got to the parish church, when it stopped. He then looked round and saw it enter the churchyard with long strides.

His plea to be transferred to another district was granted.

A grim story is told of the churchyard of Fearn Church, in Ross and Cromarty. A farmer, the evening of his wife's burial, went to the house of a girl living close to the church, and asked her to marry him. She accepted him, and just before nightfall was sitting on his knee laughing and joking. The girl's mother, seeing them, was greatly shocked, and reminded the farmer that his wife, a good and faithful woman, was only just buried and was still almost warm with life.

The farmer laughed and said, "She may look warm enough in her coffin but she was cold enough when she was put there."

Hardly had he spoken when his face became convulsed with terror, for standing in the adjoining churchyard of Fearn, peering at him through the window, was the shrouded form of his dead wife.

He fled home, took to his bed at once, and died of brain fever within a fortnight.

In certain parts of Yorkshire, people have been known to sit at night in the porches of churches to see the phantoms of people destined to die within the year, and there is an alarming instance of this superstition.

An old woman of Scarborough sat in the porch of St. Mary's Church one night just before 12 o'clock. On the stroke of midnight, phantom figures one after the other glided into the church. Most of them were the doubles of people she knew. One of the last to enter the church paused to look at her, and she found herself staring at the spirit counterpart of herself. She screamed and fell senseless.

She was found in that condition and taken home, dying very shortly afterwards.

A daylight ghost makes an appearance at a church in Bedfordshire. An archaeologist, with two of his sons, was visiting the church one day when his eldest boy, looking up a flight of stairs

leading to a singing and organ gallery, saw the figure of a woman in a winding sheet standing erect with her hands crossed. There was something so uncanny about the figure, which resembled a long dead person, that the boy ran out of the church terrified and told his mother what he had seen.

The next day the archaeologist asked the sexton's wife if she had ever seen anything supernatural in the church.

"No," she told him, "I've only heard noises, but many people have declared that they have seen the singing gallery ghost. According to their description it resembles a tall dead woman in a shroud, with her hands crossed and tied at the wrists. Sometimes she is at the top of the stairs, and sometimes in a recess of the buttress outside the church."

She knew of nothing to account for the haunting.

Hinchley Church is haunted by ghostly footsteps which pace up and down the aisles in the grey hours of morning. The ghost is believed to be that of a monk who met with a tragic end in the church when it was formerly a priory.

This church is also widely known for the phenomenon of The Bloody Tomb, which derived its name from gouts of liquid resembling blood which were frequently found on it. According to tradition, in 1727 Richard Smith, a local young man, was struck and killed by a recruiting sergeant in Duck-puddle for making a joke that the sergeant resented, and ever afterwards drops like blood were periodically found on his tomb. The village people said that this was because the sergeant escaped punishment.

The haunting of Battle Abbey, near Hastings, comes into the news every now and again. In 1931, when much of the Abbey was destroyed by fire, the figure of a cowled monk, which has appeared intermittently over the centuries, was clearly seen. The following year—in July, 1932—the monk was seen again by Mr. John Vane-Pennell, a great-nephew of the Duchess of Cleveland, a former owner of the Abbey, who spent the night there with his sister.

They took camp beds into the inner crypt, which was once the monks' mortuary and is said to be the burying place of former abbots. As they made their way down at about 11.30 p.m., Vane-Pennell said, he thought he smelt incense.

"A little after midnight, in the pathway of moonlight thrown by one of the arches, I saw the shadow of what I am prepared to swear was a cowled monk. The shadow was there very plainly on the stone floor of the crypt, and not a sound of a footstep.

"I awoke my sister and we both heard a man chanting in a clear solo voice parts of 'Gloria in Excelsis.' From overhead in the

monks' dormitory we could hear the creaking of wooden boards although the dormitory is floored with asphalt, and heard the shuffle of footsteps."

The sounds ceased, after which they heard nothing more.

In 1928 occurred the haunting of South Mimms Rectory, in Hertfordshire. The vicar of the church, the Rev. Allen Hay, then said: "I have not seen the vicarage ghost but I have felt its presence. I have awakened several times at 3 a.m. and been instantly conscious of its benevolent presence. I have felt its beneficent influences, and been so easy in my mind that I have soon dropped off to sleep again."

His wife had the same sort of experience, as had several visitors. One of Mr. Hay's parishioners, Miss Long, said that one afternoon when she was in the church she saw a man praying in the priest's stall in the chancel and she wondered at his being there in the afternoon. Suddenly the man disappeared through the closed door leading to the vestry. Miss Long then realised what she had seen was no living person but a ghost.

The description she gave of the apparition tallied exactly with that of Mr. Hay's predecessor.

A strange case of a haunting in Somerset is told of St. Decuman's Church, Watchet.

A schoolmaster was passing the church one night when he met some robbers who asked him where a rich woman who had died recently was buried. At first he refused to say, but when they threatened to kill him he told them. They took him to the crypt of the church, and bid him open the woman's coffin and take seven rings from her fingers.

He had removed six rings and was pulling off the seventh when the woman suddenly cried, "Brothers and sisters—arise quickly and help me. No rest had I during my life, and now they will let me have none immediately after my death."

As she finished speaking all the coffins opened, and the dead came out. The robbers took to their heels.

The horrified schoolmaster ran up a flight of stairs and hid in the choir, but the ghosts pursued him. He pushed them away from him, and at midnight they returned to their coffins.

The schoolmaster ran home and in the morning sent for the clergyman and told him what had happened, afterwards lapsing into a painful illness from which he died.

A few years ago myself and two friends hearing that a church in Somerset not far from Bridgwater was rumoured to be haunted, spent a night's vigil there. My friends had had no previous

experience of ghost-hunting and were perfectly open-minded regarding the existence of supernatural phenomena. We had not been told anything definite about the haunting.

The church occupied a very isolated position, being more than a quarter of a mile from a village or human habitation and close to a spinney. Before commencing our vigil we searched the church thoroughly to make certain no one was hiding in it; always a first precaution in investigations of this nature. We then made sure the doors were all fastened and that no one could enter from outside the building. We then sat in the dark in different places in the church.

A little after eleven o'clock my friend who was seated close to the vestry called out and asked if we other two were moving about. We replied that we certainly were not. He then told us he had heard very distinctly footsteps in the vestry. He counted them, and there were nine. Nothing occurred after that for a very long time.

About one o'clock my two friends, tiring of sitting, went for a walk outside the church, leaving me locked in alone. Every now and then I sensed the presence of something moving along the aisles, but saw nothing.

After my friends returned and were again seated, we all heard whispering and muttering around us; the church seemed to be full of ghostly entities. This lasted for some considerable time. When the sounds ceased nothing further occurred, and we left the church soon after dawn.

I wanted very much to go there again, but my chances of doing so were wrecked by a London paper learning of our ghostly experience. As a consequence of the paper's mention of it, the church was besieged by newspaper reporters from neighbouring towns and crowds of curious people. The vicar of the church was so annoyed by this publicity that he would not permit me to hold another vigil in the building.

The famous haunting of Holy Trinity Church, Micklegate, York, is said to have its origin in the days of the suppression of monasteries and convents.

A party of soldiers came to the convent attached to the church and were confronted by the abbess, who said she would oppose their entry even if it meant her death. They barbarously murdered her and the convent was destroyed. Ever afterwards her ghost has haunted the church.

A bright light in the form of a woman has been seen to glide across a window on the east side of the building. The figure has

been robed and hooded. After some time the illuminated figure has crossed the window again, carrying in its arms what looked like a child.

It is said to appear often on Trinity Sunday.

A vivid haunting is claimed of a church in a Midland county. In this well known case a traveller was walking along a lonely road leading to town when he was overtaken by a storm. Seeing the church ahead he ran to it and found to his relief the door was unlocked. Opening it he was greatly surprised to find a service going on. He sat in a pew, and had not been there long before a man entered the building and walked up the centre aisle.

To the traveller's horror the man was headless.

Leaning against a pillar looking at the clergyman was a tall dark man. There was something very sinister about him, and he regarded the parson with an expression of diabolical amusement. When the parson ascended to the pulpit he saw the dark man and his face became convulsed with terror.

Weird, ghostly music then filled the church, there were loud peals of mocking laughter, the church was illuminated with a lurid, unearthly light; then suddenly all the figures vanished and there was total darkness.

As soon as the traveller could recover from his terror he groped his way out of the building. The storm had ceased, and he was able to continue on his journey. Making enquiries as soon as he reached town, he learned that the church had long been abandoned, and was well known to be haunted, but that there was no definite explanation for the haunting, nothing beyond the rumour that a rector who lived years ago had practised black magic.

The haunting of Hyssington Church, Montgomeryshire, took a very unusual form. A man who had lived a very evil life died at a village not far off and after his death the country lanes all around became haunted by a phantom bull. One woman who saw it had a fit, another woman fell dead, and many were terrified.

One night after tearing along the lanes the bull was seen to dash into Hyssington Churchyard, where it remained for some time, careering among the tombstones. Finally it went on to the village, where clergymen succeeded in laying it.

All church and churchyard hauntings, of course, do not have a feasible explanation, nor do the ghosts that are seen always take recognisable human or even animal form. They sometimes are neither.

One of my own most frightening experiences was at an old

cemetery in the Midlands. I was approaching the long disused cemetery late one night when I saw standing outside it a nude figure about seven feet high. It had no arms and legs, and a round head like that of some bizarre animal.

I was badly scared and hurried from the spot.

I learned afterwards that an in-law of mine had seen one day a similar apparition squatting on the bed in the spare room of his old house; and that the same thing had been seen outside the village by several people. It was presumably a somewhat ubiquitous elemental spirit.

Its appearance had no apparent significance. It was merely very terrifying.

To go on to legend, St. Bartholomew-the-Great, in Smithfield, London, is said to be haunted by the ghost of its founder, Rayer or Rahere, who lived in the reign of Henry 1. The ghost is heard walking along the aisles and ambulatories.

I was once alone for a time in this church in the dead of night, but neither saw nor heard anything ghostly.

A ghost said to haunt Canterbury Cathedral is that of Joan of Navarre, the second wife of Henry IV, who was buried in the cathedral. Joan was married first to the Duke of Brittany, and after his death to Henry IV.

In later years, a widow again, she was imprisoned by her stepson, Henry V, charged with witchcraft and accused of "compassing the death of the king in the most horrible manner that could be devised." She was released by Henry V before he died, and spent the last years of her life at the old palace of Havering-atte-Bower, in Essex. There she is said to have carried on practising the black arts, and for her wickedness was doomed to be earthbound.

Perhaps the most widely known of all legendary hauntings is that of the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, in the Tower of London.

The story goes that the officer on duty at the Tower was one night near the chapel when he saw the windows were illuminated. He spoke to the sentry and asked if he knew the meaning of it.

The man replied, "No, sir. I only know there are queer things going on inside."

The officer fetched a ladder and mounting it, peered through one of the windows. What he saw nearly made him tumble off the ladder. The interior of the church was aglow with a ghostly light, and walking up the central aisle was a procession of phantom knights and ladies. At the head of them was a ghost the officer recognised from a portrait he had seen. It was Anne Boleyn.

After the procession had walked with slow and measured steps all round the church it abruptly vanished and the church was plunged into total darkness. Hardly able to believe his senses, the officer returned to his quarters.

This phantom procession headed by Anne Boleyn, who was buried in the chapel, is said to have been seen on other occasions.

THE BLACK MONK OF NEWSTEAD

THERE are few families in England whose ancestral homes have been more haunted than the Byrons. Newstead Abbey, the ancient home of the clan, is steeped in grim traditions, and of all the stories of weird and ghostly happenings that have gathered round this former monastery in Nottinghamshire, those relating to the Black Friar, known as the evil genius of the Byrons, are, in my opinion, the most arresting and extraordinary.

Although the Black Friar is said to have been seen during the residence of the Byrons in all parts of the Abbey and grounds, he apparently haunted one room in particular, which came to be known as "the Haunted Chamber." It is in connection with this room that the following story is told.

One evening, during the latter part of the lifetime of the predecessor of the poet Byron, a gentleman came to stay at the Abbey when it was crowded to excess. This being so, there was no alternative but to give him the Haunted Chamber.

Fortunately he was a sceptic.

"Ghosts!" he cried, when he was informed that this room was reputed to be haunted—"ghosts don't worry me, because there are no such things. If I see what you call a ghost tonight I shall know it is a trickster, and treat him or her accordingly. I am well armed."

And he showed his host and those present a pistol, which he assured them was well primed and loaded.

He retired to his room somewhat early, for the long journey had tired him, and after he had drunk a final nightcap before a blazing fire he undressed and got into bed. He soon fell asleep, only to wake about midnight with a violent start and the unusual sensation of being chained to the spot, utterly unable to move a hand or foot.

The moon was at the full, and its brilliant beams, pouring with an unearthly whiteness through the windows, fell in a broad stream on the panels of a cupboard door, almost directly opposite the foot of the bed. The sceptic, feeling constrained to follow the course of the moonlight, glanced at this door, and, as he did so, it seemed to him that the handle suddenly began to turn. Rubbing his eyes to make sure he was awake and not dreaming, he looked again, and, as before, he seemed to see the bright shiny brass handle slowly turning round.

Horribly fascinated now, he sat up in bed and stared, and once again he saw the handle in deliberate, very deliberate, motion, as if someone at the other side of it was slowly and stealthily turning it. The guest felt under the pillow for his pistol, and then remembered that he had left it in the pocket of his dress coat, which he had thrown across the back of one of the armchairs.

He made a terrific mental struggle to get out of bed to fetch the gun, but his limbs were, for the time being, paralysed; they refused to obey him and he had to remain where he was. Then he looked again at the cupboard door and this time he saw it move. The handle had now ceased turning but the door itself was very slowly and deliberately opening.

Of course, he argued, it was a hoax. Some member of the house party, perhaps the host himself, was there in hiding in order to frighten him. What rubbish! He wouldn't be frightened; and yet, as he watched the door, all agleam with cold, white moonbeams, slowly and noiselessly opening wider and wider, a sickly sensation of fear began to steal over him.

What was it—whatever could it be? he kept asking himself, and when would it have done with the nerve-racking preamble and disclose its identity?

A little wider, a little wider still, until at last he felt—indeed he was absolutely positive—he saw something. But what in heaven's name was it?

His heart nearly ceased beating, the thing was so dreadful. It was a white, ghastly white face, with two dark menacing eyes that gleamed balefully as they fell on him.

The door now opened wider still and a dark figure stepped surreptitiously into the room, and, advancing noiselessly towards the bed, disclosed the outline of a monk, wearing a cowl and beads, but with a countenance the very opposite of saintly. Indeed so horrible was the monk's expression that the guest was petrified and could offer no resistance when the figure came slowly up to him, and, bending down, thrust its face right in his.

He remained passive until at last the monk, with a loud malevolent chuckle, turned round, and, moving with a curious gliding motion, seemed to amalgamate with the moonbeams and disappear.

Nothing further happening, the guest then succeeded in composing himself sufficiently to lie down and try to go to sleep again. However, the morning found him still tossing about in his bed, unrefreshed and heavy-eyed. At breakfast he narrated what had occurred to his host, adding that he firmly believed he had seen a ghost, and confessing that he was at last cured of his scepticism.

While he had been talking Lord Byron, popularly known as "Devil Byron," had grown paler and paler, until, at the end, he seemed utterly unable to make any response. In a few seconds, however, he pulled himself together sufficiently to speak, and although still greatly agitated exclaimed:

"What you saw, sir, was the Black Friar of the Byrons, and since it never appears saving before a great catastrophe affecting some member of my family, you may expect to hear bad news of us shortly."

Lord Byron's words were only too true, for within a fortnight one of his relatives, who is stated to have been in the house at the time the guest underwent his nightmare experience, met with a most tragic death.

Another story of the Black Friar belongs to a later period.

One evening shortly before the death of the poet Byron, one of the female retainers of the family arranged a clandestine meeting with her sweetheart, a village swain, in the cloisters of the Abbey. Arriving at the trysting-place precisely at the appointed hour, she saw someone who in the uncertain light she took to be her beloved, standing under the shadow of an archway with his back turned towards her.

Stealing up to him without making any sound, she was about playfully to slap him on the back for a surprise, when he suddenly turned round, and she saw to her horror that the figure she had thought to be her sweetheart was a monk who, with ghastly white face and two hollow, lurid eyes, glared devilishly at her. The shock was so great that she fainted.

A few days later the whole country rang with the news of Byron's death.

The poet himself firmly believed in this ghost, and always declared he saw it shortly before his brief, ill-fated union with Anne Milbanke. Also, Miss Kitty Parkins, a relative and con-

temporary of the poet's, not only saw the Black Friar but made a sketch of him from memory.

There is another story of much later date which I learned when staying in the neighbourhood.

A farmer was driving home late one spring night in the immediate vicinity of Newstead, when his horse shied and then, plunging forward, was off like a rocket. For some seconds the farmer was too intent on trying to curb the animal to notice what was passing around him, but as soon as he succeeded in partially controlling his horse, he became aware of a tall figure clad in black monkish robes striding along the road by his side.

In the brilliant moonlight the farmer could see the figure distinctly, and what struck him as most remarkable was that although his horse was still tearing along at a breakneck speed, the figure by his side was keeping up with it apparently without making any effort at all. At first he thought he must be dreaming, and, rubbing his eyes, he looked again; but the figure was still there, still striding along in a most leisurely and unconcerned fashion.

Presently they arrived at one of the park entrances leading to the Abbey, when the figure left them and advanced, still with the same easy mechanical strides, towards the lodge gates. Impelled by an irresistible curiosity the farmer turned in his seat to look at it, and then for the first time saw it as a whole. Its body resembled that of a very tall man, but the face, which was very distinctly outlined in the moonlight, was that of a skeleton, with two lurid deep-set eyes. The impression it conveyed to him was one of intense hostility.

The farmer, his eyes transfixed with horror, watched the figure pass through the lodge gates, which were closed, and advance up the carriage drive, where it was speedily lost to view.

Two or three days later it was rumoured in the neighbourhood—the rumour being afterwards verified—that someone closely connected with the Byron family had died very suddenly.

POLTERGEISTS AND OTHER PUZZLES

It scarcely needs to be said that ghosts do not appear only in castle ruins, old houses, and desolate spots in the country. We are constantly reading of strange ghostly things seen and heard in town houses and flats, while there have been prominent instances of haunted council houses—a seemingly popular oddity which always quickly attracts the newspaper reporters.

Poltergeists, of course, account for many of these hauntings. One of the most vivid attacks in recent years by one or more of these noisy and destructive unseen spirits occurred at Runcorn, Cheshire, in the autumn of 1952.

Violent phenomena emanating from an unknown source began suddenly one night in a house in Byron Street, Runcorn. The occupants of the house were awakened by queer noises in the drawers of a dressing-table and on the walls of the rooms; articles were knocked to the floor and unseen hands took the bedclothes from sleepers.

Tables crashed, windows rattled, doors jarred, and a child's box of bricks were thrown across one of the rooms.

Methodist ministers, spiritualist mediums, members of various psychical research societies, Church of England parsons and Roman Catholic priests all came to the house to try and account for the disturbances and if possible lay them, all to no avail.

A heavy dressing-table was thrown about by an unseen entity, an armchair was lifted in the air and dashed against the wall, the kitchen clock was dashed down, a carpet was taken up and rolled across the floor, and a linen chest danced about on the floor. A newspaper reporter was struck heavily on the head and shoulders by books.

Every attempt to explain the phenomena on natural grounds failed.

The most likely of the many theories advanced was that the mysterious forces at work derived their energy from a sixteen-year-old boy who was a member of the family occupying the house. He was closely watched, but was never observed to cause any of the disturbances.

The police were summoned to investigate the disturbances. They saw some of the weird happenings but failed to discover any satisfactory explanation for them, and their source remained a mystery.

From poltergeists to visible phantoms. The haunting of a house some years ago near the Clifton, Bristol, suspension bridge caused a sensation. A representative of the Society for Psychical Research and Mr. Bligh Bond of Glastonbury fame were among the people who stayed a night in it.

Hearing about the house I interviewed Major Thomas and his family who had experienced the hauntings. The phenomena were mixed. They included a weird, ominous cry that was heard; the phantoms of a woman and a little boy; the winding of a phantom clock; and a strange, uncouth ghost that came up the staircase to the top landing with great bounds.

I spent several nights in the house and only on one night did anything ghostly occur. With me that night were two youths who sat in the hall by a door at the top of a flight of steps leading into a gloomy cellar; a retired army colonel who sat on the top landing; and several other people who sat in rooms on the next floor.

I myself sat alone in one of the rooms.

The time passed uneventfully till about two o'clock, when I heard the two youths talking very loudly.

I went downstairs and found them in a state of great agitation. They said they had heard footsteps ascend the cellar stairs, that the door at the head of the stairs had swung open, and a terrifying luminous figure, unlike a human being, had passed them and gone up the hall staircase with great leaps. They were so frightened that we ended the vigil and came away.

All kinds of theories were propounded to account for the hauntings but none of them was satisfactory. Subsequently I spent nights in alleged haunted houses near St. James Parade, in Redland, and in Brislington without anything ghostly occurring.

Years ago a house in Alma Vale Road, Clifton, became badly haunted.

I had a first-hand account of it. My informant was at one time a maid in the house. She shared a bedroom with another girl, and they were awakened one night by a fearful crash in the room—it

sounded as if a lot of crockery had been dashed upon the floor. They lit the gas but could discover nothing to account for the noise.

They heard the same sound repeatedly at night, and one afternoon my informant saw two women dressed in very old fashioned clothes—worn in the sixties of the last century—come down the staircase, and vanish when they reached the last stair.

The house was built on the site of a pond, known as the suicide pond, on account of the number of people who drowned themselves in it. The haunting was believed to be due to this.

A house in South Leigh Road, Clifton, was also for a time haunted. (Hauntings generally last only for a short time and after a time begin again. They are very intermittent.) Three Clifton sisters had had ghostly experiences in this house, where they lived with their father, a retired army officer, for some years. One day, not long after they came there, they were in the drawing-room, their father and the maid were out, and they were alone in the house. Hearing a noise in the kitchen, they all three went downstairs.

On entering the kitchen they saw a girl in a very soiled print dress kneeling in front of the range. She had red hair, and was doing something with the fire-irons. Wondering who she was—they had never seen her before—they spoke, whereupon she rose, crossed the room, and went into the scullery leading out of it.

Her very pale face and expression of the utmost misery perturbed them. They followed her into the scullery but found it empty. She had disappeared; and there was no exit, only the doorway through which they had entered.

After that they saw the girl several times.

The sisters learned after they left the house that the red-haired maid was supposed to be the ghost of a servant girl employed in the house, who had drowned herself in a pool at the rear of the property.

I spent a whole night with two friends in the house when it was empty, but we neither saw nor heard anything ghostly.

THE GHOSTS OF BIRCHEN HALL

TYNESIDE has several reputed haunted mansions, among them Chirton Hall, at one time the seat of the Argylls. The mistress of one of the Dukes, locally known as "Silky", is said to have haunted the house for many years.

Birchen Hall, owned by Major Hugo Delaval, also had its several ghosts. For years at a time it stood untenanted. During one of these periods a Mr. Raw and a Mr. Hook, two friends interested in psychical research, asked permission to spend a few nights in the house.

Major Delaval granted them permission. They went to the house one fine day in September, arriving about six o'clock in the evening, and after a meal prepared for them by the caretaker, Mrs. Emmett, they strolled about the extensive and well kept grounds.

It was a very still night, with hardly a breath of wind. Away in a distant field cows stood motionless in the moonlight. Both men were smoking and every now and then talking quietly.

They were on a path fringed with bushes when they saw suddenly approaching them a woman in a dark dress. As she drew nearer they saw she was about thirty years of age with dark hair and eyes, and there was something very forbidding in her face.

"I wonder who she is?" Hook said.

"Probably a relative of the caretaker, maybe her daughter," suggested his companion.

The woman left the path and disappeared from view, and they thought no more about her.

They stayed outdoors for some time longer, and then went into the house, had drinks by the drawing-room fire, and then retired to bed in their adjoining bedrooms. Tired with the day's travelling they both soon fell asleep and slept till morning.

The next day they explored the house. It was a low, rambling

building with many gables, mullion windows, long winding corridors, dark nooks and corners and steep staircases. There was a gloom about it which the daylight could not dispel.

In the evening the two men went into the grounds again after a meal. They were walking in the same path and talking, when once again they saw the woman with the forbidding face. They saw this time that she looked foreign, and when she got nearer to them they noticed that her dress seemed to be very old-fashioned, belonging to a bygone age.

She passed without seeming to notice them, and they turned and looked after her. They were struck by a shadowy indistinctness about her which they had not noticed before, and the fact that her high heels made no sound on the hard ground.

After walking for some time longer in the garden, they went indoors and sat for a while by the drawing-room fire. They then went to their respective bedrooms.

Raw had a fire in his room and sat for some time reading a book he had brought with him. Then, tired and made drowsy by the fire, he fell asleep in his chair.

He awoke with a start to hear the sound of high heels tapping along the corridor outside his room. Instantly, all his faculties tensed, he sat bolt upright, listening. The tapping drew quickly nearer; it seemed as if the wearer of the high-heeled shoes was running. She passed his door. There were sounds of a distant struggle and a fearful spine-chilling scream, after that an eerie silence.

Raw quickly rose from his chair, opened the bedroom door and looked up and down the corridor. All was very still and deserted. The moonlight poured through an oriel window at the nearest end of the corridor, illuminating it with cold white light, while ivy leaves blown by the night breeze tapped against the window.

Puzzled, he drew back into his room and got into bed, sleeping soundly till the caretaker brought him a morning cup of tea.

"Ghosts?" Mrs. Emmett said, when Raw told her about what he had heard. "There aren't such things. You must have heard an owl. They do make queer sounds."

The woman they had seen in the garden must have been some person taking a short cut home through the grounds, she said. They did sometimes. And nothing would convince her to the contrary; the house was *not* haunted.

Raw then told Hook about the sounds in the corridor, and Hook, who had not heard them, nevertheless declared his inten-

tion of not going to bed that night; he would sit up and keep a vigil.

The two men spent their last day at Birchen Hall just roaming about, and in the evening, after their meal, strolled as usual in the grounds.

In the same place at the same time they again suddenly saw the woman with the forbidding face. She came steadily towards them. As she was about to pass, Hook stood deliberately in front of her, but she passed right *through* him without swerving or apparently seeing them, and continued on her course.

Considerably shaken, both men turned and looked after her, and again they noticed the shadowy indistinctness about her, and the quaintly old-fashioned dress.

Hook, being not a little jarred by his strange experience, later declined to go straight to his own bedroom and sat for a time in Raw's room before the fire. The heat from the fire made both men drowsy, and they fell asleep. They awoke simultaneously to hear the pattering of high heels in the corridor, the footfalls moving very quickly.

Raw jumped up and threw the door open. Running along the corridor was the shadowy figure of an elderly woman, her face convulsed with terror, and pursuing her, a horn-handled knife in one hand, was the forbidding-faced woman of their earlier encounters, her expression one of diabolical hatred and exultation.

The two figures, seen very clearly by both men, vanished round an angle in the long corridor. There were sounds of a struggle and a blood-curdling scream of terror. Then silence.

"That's enough for one night," Hook gasped. "I can't stand any more of it." He remained for the rest of the night in Raw's room, and they left the house after breakfast, calling on Major Delaval to tell him of their experience.

He listened to their story with great interest, and told them that according to a family tradition one of his ancestors, Sophia Delaval, had been murdered in the house by Marie Bloucher, her French companion, who robbed her and got away without ever being seen again. What Raw and Hook had witnessed was evidently a re-enactment of the crime.

Marie Bloucher, the Major said, had connived in getting the servants out of the house on the night of her attack, so that she had got Sophia to herself, alone and defenceless, and she had used the knife with all the strength of a man.

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK

A STRANGE story was told me many years ago by Frederick Blake, a retired civil servant. The incident happened in the sixties of the last century.

Blake went one night with his friend and fellow civil servant, named Parker, to Kate Hamilton's Club in Gerrard Street, a rendezvous in the West End of London which vied for popularity at that time with Cremorne, the Argyll Rooms and Molts. Kate, who was the queen of the demi-mondes, was in the employment of Isaac Larz, who seldom visited the club himself and left the management of it to Kate.

On the two men arriving at the entrance Parker, who was a member of the club, gave the password to a porter who rang a bell twice, as a signal to another porter at the end of a long passage that all was right. Going along the passage and passing through the door at the end of it, Blake and Parker entered a long, rather narrow room ablaze with gaslight.

It was luxuriously furnished. There was a bar at one end and many tables, seated at which were the patrons of the club, a mixed crowd of civil servants, army officers, university students, men of the Church and Law, Members of Parliament, and men of independent means. There was an army of waiters, the chief of whom was called Spurgeon owing to his likeness to a preacher of that name. Seated in a gorgeous armchair in front of the bar was Kate Hamilton, bedecked with jewels. A Cabinet Minister was paying her homage.

There were also present many women whose appearance suggested they were demones, mistresses of wealthy men and the most highly paid of prostitutes. There was much talking and laughing, the men treating the women to drinks sold at high cost—Kate got a commission on all the drinks.

This very clear word picture of the place given to me by Frederick Blake should be borne in mind when considering the next part of his narrative.

It was, he said, the early hours of the morning before the company left, leaving the premises in a very upside-down state. He and Parker went off together, as they lived near one another, and, Blake told me, though they were pleasantly warmed they were very far from intoxication.

They were walking along Piccadilly when they saw coming towards them George Payne, one of their old schoolfellows. Payne was in the army and his regiment was in New Zealand; they supposed he must be home on leave.

Walking a little way in front of them was a hospital nurse.

As Payne drew nearer to them his figure became clearer. There was no mistaking him—they knew so well his walk. He paused when he got to Albermarle Street. His face then showed up with startling clearness, and Blake and Parker started with horror, for what they looked on was the face of the dead, grey and lifeless.

The nurse walking in front of them, also having looked hard at Payne, turned very startled, took to her heels and ran across the street. The two friends watched Payne until he vanished from view, and went home much troubled.

Some weeks later they heard that George Payne had been killed in a military skirmish. His death occurred at the very time they had seen his wraith in Piccadilly.

Cases of people appearing elsewhere at the moment of their death are not uncommon, though such well authenticated accounts are, especially where there is more than one witness. Yet the number of instances of this ghostly occurrence allows little room for scepticism.

Through many years there have been faithfully sworn accounts of these apparitions. For example, the occasion when Lord Balcarres, confined in Edinburgh Castle under suspicion of being a Jacobite, was visited in the night by the wraith of his friend, Viscount Dundee, who had been killed at the battle of Killiecrankie.

In more recent times the Great War, understandably with its masses of casualties, produced many stories of visitations to their kin of soldiers who died. I have been acquainted with a number of stories of this nature and there is one incident very close to me.

A girl of my acquaintance named Blythe was engaged to John Crawford, a young officer serving at the Western Front in 1918.

One evening as she was sitting at the drawing-room window she saw him to her surprise come up the garden path.

She hastened to the front door to greet him, but found no one there.

Thinking he was hiding in fun, she called out to him. There was no reply, and when she looked for him in the garden there was not a trace of him.

A few days later she learned that he had been killed in battle, his death occurring at the time she saw his wraith.

Away from war, there are other instances of this phenomenon.

Not long ago the young members, four in number, of a South Wales family went for an excursion one day in a steamer. That evening their parents, who were watching for their return at the drawing-room window, saw them come up the garden path in single file. They both ran to the front door to greet them. But no one was there, nor was there a sign of them in the garden, only a sense of brooding depression.

Hours afterwards the parents learned that the pleasure steamer had been wrecked, and all on board her had drowned.

In cases where the visitation of the newly dead occurs only fleetingly, as a face seen at the foot of the bed, perhaps, it is often claimed that these are figments of the imagination, or dreams. But dreams themselves are often the instrument of the supernatural.

Frederick Kain, of Herwain Street, Barry Dock, dreamed one night that he saw his brother, Henry, who had migrated to New York, standing on the quayside of the river Hudson, counting his money, while around him were the dark sinister forms of men. They gradually drew menacingly nearer and nearer to Henry.

When the men were close to him, and seemingly about to pounce on him, Frederick awoke. The dream was so terribly realistic that he could not erase it from his mind. He instigated enquiries about Henry Kain and was informed that his brother was last seen on the quayside of New York, and after that nothing more was heard of him.

He disappeared, to meet, Frederick seemed sure, a tragic end.

Another, even stranger case of the supernatural visiting a person in his dreams occurred in 1835, in Glasgow.

James McLery was returning home one day when he met William Wright, an acquaintance, who looked somewhat disturbed and asked him if he believed in dreams. McLery replied that he did not, whereupon Wright said he had dreamed that his friend James Imrie had stabbed him suddenly with a knife he

used for cutting leather (Imrie was a shoemaker). Wright declared he could never forget the awful face Imrie had made when he made the stabbing stroke.

McLery told Wright to forget the dream, and left him.

Some days later McLery was in the same street when he heard loud cries of "Murder!" and Wright rushed to him, a bloody knife in his hand. "I've killed Imrie," he said. "In his house. I went to see him and he made the same hideous face I'd seen him make in my dream. Feeling sure he was about to kill me I stabbed him, and oh, my God. He is dead. I've killed him!"

Wright was seized by the police, who told him that Imrie was not dead. When Wright heard this he wept for joy. "Thank God!" he cried. "I am not a murderer after all." His joy was, however, premature, for Imrie died that night in hospital.

Wright's impassioned defence that the dream was answerable for Imrie's death carried no weight. He was found guilty of murder and executed.

THE NIGHT HOUNDS

OF all the ghosts of animals, dog phantoms would seem to be the most common. One of the best known dog ghosts is the big, terrifying dog phantom that is said to haunt the borders of Dartmoor. It is believed to be the ghost of the bad Lady Howard, who is credited with the murder of one husband if not more.

In Wales a phantom mastiff has been seen to haunt country lanes and woods and is described as a most alarming and evil spectre.

A farmer was returning home one night along a lane leading to the Liswerry crossways, in Monmouthshire, when his horse suddenly shied, pitching him from the saddle, and, showing great terror, bolted for home. The farm servants, finding the horse, set off in search of their employer and found him lying on the ground. He declared he had seen the phantom mastiff.

It took him some days to recover from the shock and fall he had received.

In Norfolk and Cambridgeshire there is an equally terrifying dog ghost called the Shag or Shuck, which is said to haunt churchyards and lonely spots; one of its special places, called Shuck's Lane, is near Overstrand in Norfolk.

In the neighbourhood of Leeds there is a big, shaggy-haired phantom dog known by the name of Padfoot. To see it is a portent of death. According to Baring-Gould, a Horbury man was going home one night when he saw a big white dog in a hedge. He aimed a blow at it, and his stick passed right through it. He went home greatly frightened, fell ill and died.

In Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire there are visitations by a great spectral hound, and in parts of Lancashire a large black hound with fiery eyes is believed to portend a death. These phantoms have been seen from time to time not only by possibly

superstitious country folk but by people who beforehand were, to say the least, highly sceptical of such things.

In a valley between Darlington and Houghton there is a phantom dog which is said to howl and bark before the death of anyone in the locality. The River Belah in Westmorland was for years haunted by a terrifying phantom dog, though this was eventually exorcised.

From the lone dog phantoms to the packs of spectral hounds. A sight of these is said to bring misfortune, sometimes even death to the seer. Dartmoor is haunted by the Yesk or Wisk phantom hounds; in Wales there are the phantom Cwn Annwn, and in Cornwall the devil and his dandy dogs.

J. Q. Couch in his "Folk-lore of a Cornish Village" relates the appearance of the devil and his dandy dogs to a farm labourer. The man was returning home late one night when he heard the baying of hounds. They were phantom dogs—there was no mistaking the supernatural tone of the baying. And they were following him.

Forced to look back, the man saw to his horror not only the diabolical hounds but also their infernal huntsman master, who had horns and a tail and was like the descriptions of him. In his despair the man fell to his knees and prayed for deliverance from the powers of evil, whereupon hounds and devil halted for a moment, and then vanished.

In the vicinity of Cliviger, in Lancashire, there are the Gabriel Ratchets. A Sheffield man when passing one night a lonely churchyard on his way home distinctly heard them.

An old man passing along a lane near the Devon village of St. Mary Tavy during the last century heard the howling and barking of the Yeth spectral pack of hounds.

Legends of wild huntsmen riding with packs of spectral hounds abound throughout Europe. The most famous of all occult hunts is that of Herne the Hunter who, according to general belief, was a forester at Windsor in the reign of Henry VIII. Since his death for some unknown reason he and his pack of spectral hounds have haunted Windsor Castle grounds. The last recorded appearance of Herne the Hunter was towards the end of the last century, when his hounds dashed past two boys on their way back through Windsor Park to Eton College.

In the forest of Fontainebleau a pack of spectral hounds is hunted by Hugh Capet. Henry IV is said to have seen this spectral hunt when hunting one day shortly before his assassination. A

similar phantom pack haunts a forest at Blois, and another a forest in a midland region of France.

There are several packs of hellish hounds in Germany, chiefly in the region of the Black Forest and the Hartz Mountains. In a forest near Danzig the wild huntsman is known as Dietrich von Bern. In Schleswig, one of the forests is haunted by spectral hounds headed by the ghost of Duke Abel, who murdered his brother and committed many other crimes.

According to tradition, Abel was swallowed up in a morass close to the River Eyder when on a marauding expedition. His body was recovered and buried in a cathedral at first, and afterwards in a marsh.

The spot became haunted by the most blood-curdling cries and groans, and the ghost of Abel was said to be seen on a phantom horse accompanied by three horrible looking phantom hounds; all attempts to lay his ghost have failed.

Ghosts known as Kirk-grims have been seen to haunt churchyards. These have appeared as dogs, though they can take many different forms, including occasionally that of a pig. Many attempts to catch and stop the Kirk-grims have been made, and all have failed.

There are several recorded accounts of phantom bears.

One dark winter's night a soldier on sentry duty outside the guardhouse of the Tower of London saw the luminous figure of a large bear come up the stairs from a cellar. Terribly scared he thrust at it with his bayonet, and on the bayonet passing through it without any effect, he fainted. He was found lying unconscious on the ground and carried to the guard-room.

He recovered sufficiently to narrate what he had seen, but died in a few days. The phantom was thought to be that of one of the bears kept at the Tower years ago.

A house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, is said to be haunted still by a phantom bear. It is thought to be the ghost of a bear baited in the days of bear-baiting; the house is sited on land that formerly belonged to Henry VIII, who numbered bear-baiting among his favourite amusements.

THE HOUSE OF THE BLUE LIGHTS

THOUGH my lifelong interest has been ghost-hunting I have not spent all my time looking out for ghosts, and in fact one of my strangest experiences came about purely by chance. It happened in the 1920s, and although I had at this time been active in a number of investigations, ghosts and hauntings were very far from my mind when I took the train across London to visit a little country place in Essex.

It was noon when I arrived there, and about 7 p.m. when I set out on my return journey. By way of variety I decided to walk three or four miles across a very pretty bit of country with which I was totally unfamiliar, and then train the rest.

The night was dark, heavy black clouds completely obscuring the moon and stars. After I had proceeded about two miles along a fairly level tract of country the road dipped, and I found myself descending into what appeared to be a rather thickly wooded valley.

It is not often I feel depressed—really depressed; but as I plunged farther and farther down into that very silent vale, I became strangely influenced by the surroundings. I seemed to be so utterly alone, cut off from every evidence of human life and habitation, that I could scarcely credit I was, in reality, less than a score of miles from London.

Walking steadily on I eventually arrived at the foot of the decline. Here I halted, and I was peering about in the dark when my attention was attracted by a dull, glimmering light in among the trees on one side of the road. It did not seem to proceed from a house, and there was something about it which puzzled me. Curious to ascertain its origin, I climbed over a low fence, and advancing towards the light with every caution, for the ground seemed full of pitholes, I soon found myself on the edge of an open piece of ground.

While I was debating what to do next, whether to press still farther forward or remain where I was, another light appeared, somewhat bigger than the other but of the same peculiar leadenish, unhealthy blue.

Then, very abruptly, both lights disappeared.

There was now a brief interval in which nothing happened, and then, straight in front of me, there was a flash of light that lit up the scenery all around and I was able for the first time to get some idea of my surroundings.

I was in either a park or garden, but one which had long ceased to be cultivated, for everywhere were signs of neglect and confusion, fallen branches across walks, stacks of dead leaves, rank weeds, and debris of all kinds.

Away, behind all this, loomed a great building festooned to the chimney-pots with ivy. I had no time to see more, for the light disappeared with the same startling abruptness as it had come and I was once again plunged into darkness.

I had seen the Will-o'-the-Wisp, but these flashing blue lights appeared to me to be essentially different, and more like what are in certain parts of Wales called Corpse Candles or Churchyard Candles. These are most frequently seen before a death, though they have been known to manifest themselves in some locality where a death from unnatural causes has taken place. For example, a crossroads in Monmouthshire, where a murderer who had been gibbeted was buried, has been periodically haunted, generally at Christmas Eve, by a blue flame fashioned like a giant candle.

I waited some time for a recurrence of the lights, and as none came, and the cold from the damp ground began to penetrate my clothes, I finally retraced my steps to the road and continued my journey in the dark.

The following day I again took the train across London and made enquiries in the neighbourhood regarding the house, and, discovering the name of the agent in whose hands it was, decided to approach him to ask permission to keep an all-night vigil there.

By a stroke of luck, the agent turned out to be someone I had met some years before, and to whom I had introduced a certain amount of business. He listened to my account of the lights quite gravely, and, shaking his head, remarked, "No, I cannot explain them, nor have I heard of anyone else seeing them. The property has stood empty for years, and is in a bad state of repair."

"Is there any story attached to it?" I asked.

"There are to so many old houses," he replied evasively. "And if there are none to begin with, people invent them. If you would like to see over the place I will write you an order."

"Could I stay there for the night?" I asked, "if I promise not to divulge any names?"

"I think that could be managed," he said. "There is no need of a key, for nearly all the windows at the back of the premises are broken, so you can get in easily. You are not likely to be disturbed when once you are there, because, from what I understand, no one ventures near the grounds after nightfall. If you do experience anything, let me know, as I should like to hear about it."

He then wrote me out an order to view, which I still have, and I quitted his presence with many thanks.

This conversation took place one Monday in November, but owing to a succession of disasters I was kept from fulfilling my intention to ghost hunt till Christmas Eve, which is, by the way, one of the nights of the year most favourable to the experiencing of ghost manifestations; when wraiths are to be met with at crossroads, in and around old burial places, in spots that have tempted people to put an end to their existence, and in crime-stained mansions.

On this occasion I had decided against a lone vigil and arranged for someone to accompany me, and it was only at the last moment I received a wire from him saying he was down with a severe cold, and could not come. Hence, armed with a torch and a box of sandwiches, I set off alone.

Houses look different in the daytime, and when I once again clambered over the wooden fence and approached the spot where I had stood and watched the lights, I could hardly believe it was the same building. It was in a slight hollow with a cluster of very tall trees on either side of it, and as I approached it the crows perched in the topmost branches greeted me with hoarse croaks.

It was a huge house with high, narrow windows and jalousies, Italian-style, and a ponderous hall door studded with iron nails, like the door of a cathedral. There was no difficulty in gaining admittance as several of the lower windows were entirely empty of glass. I got in through a window close to a door, and found myself in a stone-flagged passage. As one would naturally suppose, the place smelt very damp and earthy, and I now became conscious of a sense of loneliness and depression, somewhat akin to that I had experienced the night I saw the lights.

The front portion of the house was in a trifle better condition. Crawling insects held high holiday on the once polished boards

of the vast entrance hall, while cobwebs festooned the oak-pannelled walls, but there was no bad decay nor any excessive damp.

On ascending the main staircase the sense of depression increased, and I now got for the first time a very unpleasant eerie feeling which I had some difficulty in overcoming. Each step I took awoke a hundred and one long, reverberating echoes that were quite alarming in their intensity and queer sound of hollowness; it was not easy to write it all off to suggestion.

Although it was broad daylight, the long corridors that confronted me on the first floor were swathed in gloom and laden with shadows. The rooms, too, were dark with shadows and full of a sense of loneliness. I went everywhere in the building and satisfied myself that there was no one in hiding, then retired to the entrance hall and, throwing open the windows to let in the fresh air and thin sunshine, sat down there and had my lunch.

I then whiled away the afternoon wandering around the extensive grounds and having tea in a village some mile or so distant, and towards evening returned to the house to commence my ghost-hunting in earnest.

It was about seven o'clock when I re-entered the grounds and approached the house by a long gravel path, hedged in on either side by laurel and other bushes. The moon was now out, and its beams illuminated the scene with a cold, silvery glow. I was looking determinedly straight ahead, for I did not altogether relish the prospect of a night alone in that very gloomy, utterly deserted building, when I suddenly saw a figure.

It was that of a girl—a slight, tallish girl, clad in a white frock, with a dark cloak over it. She wore no hat, but her fair hair hung in a mass of bright disorder over her shoulders. She was hurrying towards me, and carrying in one bare hand a pail, which shone and sparkled in the moonlight. I could not see her face with any degree of distinctness, because it seemed, somehow, to be in the shadow, continually in the shadow. When she got within about twenty feet of me she abruptly turned down a side path and disappeared from view.

Directly I reached this path I looked down it, and there she was, still hurrying along, and still carrying the pail, which gleamed so brightly by her side. In a few seconds, however, seeming somehow to amalgamate with the moonbeams, she vanished.

I went to the spot where she had disappeared. It was hedged on either side by a thick growth of laurels. I looked everywhere, but

could see no trace of her, and though I listened intently I could detect no sound of footsteps.

I then recollected that I had not previously heard any—that she had walked with absolute silence, neither her feet nor the bucket she was carrying making any sound whatever.

Struck with the oddness of it, I now hurried to the house, and, entering the same way as before, I looked around in search of a likely spot for my vigil. I eventually selected a room on the first floor. It led into a small archway situated about halfway down a long, narrow passage, at one end of which was a bay window, and at the other a very gloomy recess.

There being no chairs, I seated myself on the window-sill in the empty room and, with the torch at my side ready for instant use, awaited events. The night was icy, typical of Christmas, but fine. Away down below, the gravel drive glittered in the moonbeams, while farther off, a belt of larch and fir trees threw dense black shadows on the unkempt grass.

There was not a breath of air, not a branch stirring, no noise of any sort to be heard, and the distant sound of a church clock striking eight broke the silence with a startling distinctness. Of course, I soon began to hear things, one always does in houses, especially long disused houses. From somewhere close at hand some water dripped, then a board gave a creak, and presently there was a slight scurrying sound in the passage which I assured myself was mice or rats. I nerved myself to go and look, and saw nothing, only bare, moonlit walls and endless shadows. I returned to my seat by the window in the empty room and waited again.

Nine, ten, eleven o'clock went by and nothing happened, and then at last midnight came, ushered in by irritatingly slow and ponderous boomings from the distant clock. A moment later, from the passage outside, came a regular measured tap-tap, as of shoes on a polished oak floor, faint but distinct, and growing nearer and nearer.

I admit I was startled. On and on the footsteps came, cautiously yet firmly—tap, tap, tap. I forced myself to the door and listened. On and on came the steps till they reached the doorway. Then there was a frightful scream, followed by an unnerving silence.

When, some moments afterwards, I found courage to look out into the passage there was nothing to be seen. I left the house and walked to the railway station in the village, where I sat on the platform in the cold of Christmas morning waiting an eternity for a train.

A week later I returned to the house agent and narrated to him

all the incidents of my adventure. This time he was less evasive and more open with me, and confessed that my experience tallied to a remarkable extent with the many rumours about the house which had been spread.

"The place," he said, "is claimed to be haunted about this time every year by the ghost of an ancestress of the present owner. She was strongly suspected of having committed a most atrocious crime, and as a punishment for her sins it is said that she is compelled to walk the house in a guise too hideous for human eyes to look upon without either going mad or dying on the spot. I believe it actually happened, some years ago, that she did reveal her face to the then owner of the property (she never reveals it to strangers) and he died hours afterwards."

As the present owner of the house did not encourage further investigation I had to leave the matter there, though I should have liked to have enquired more about the girl with the pail.

COMPACTS WITH THE DEAD

ONE of the most widely known cases of a death compact is that of Lord Tyrone and Miss Blank.

Both deists—believing in God without accepting the revelation implied in religious dogma—they were brought up together by a guardian. When he died the person who took his place tried to persuade them to cease to be deists. They refused to do as he wished, and made a compact that he or she who died first should appear to the survivor and say if deism was the right religion.

Miss Blank, who married St. Martin Beresford, appeared one day with a black band round her wrist. It was not until she was on her death-bed that she explained the reason for the band. She said that one night, at the time of his death, the ghost of Lord Tyrone had appeared to her, and had told her that revealed religion was the true one. Furthermore he had prophesied her future, and as a proof that his visit to her was real and not imaginary, he had put his cold hand on her wrist.

The wrist at once withered, every nerve shrinking. That was why she wore the black band.

The band subsequently passed into the possession of Lady Betty Cobb, who attested to the truth of the death compact and reason for the black band.

Another very well known case of a death compact is that between the Rev. Theodore Buckley and Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie.

When they were undergraduates at Oxford, Buckley and Mackenzie made a compact that the one who died first should appear to the survivor and give him proof of the survival of human identity after death by laying a hand on his forehead.

Buckley died on January 30th, 1856. On the night of February 2nd—three days later—Mackenzie awoke to feel a cold hand on his forehead, and opening his eyes, saw the luminous figure of

Buckley standing by his bedside. Not a word was uttered by the phantom, which vanished in a few seconds.

Then there is the case of the compact between the Duchess of Mazarin and Madame de Beauclair. This was of the usual kind, namely, that whichever of the two died first should inform the survivor in some way or other if there was a future life.

The Duchess was the first to die, but it was not until a long time after her death that she appeared to Madame de Beauclair. She then told her there was a future life, and also when she would die. Her prediction proved to be true.

Another instance on record is of a compact made between two Englishmen, one of whom went to India. The man who stayed behind was driving across a heath one evening when his horse shied, nearly unseating him. Looking round to see the cause of the horse's behaviour, he was considerably startled to see by his side the apparition of his friend in India. The moonlight focusing on the apparition thrust it into strong relief, revealing every feature.

The phantom vanished in a few moments. Directly it was gone the horse set off at a brisk pace, and did not stop again till it was home.

The man in the trap instinctively knew that his friend had appeared to him in fulfilment of the compact.

In "The Life and Times of Lord Brougham," written by himself, there is an instance of a death compact between him and a friend. It was made while they were at university.

Many years after making the compact, Lord Brougham was having a bath when the apparition of his friend suddenly appeared. Not a word was spoken, and the apparition very soon vanished.

Lord Brougham realised that it had come to assure him there was a future life, regarding which he and his friend had often debated.

Lastly, there is a story I heard of a compact made between two schoolboys, John Fermoy and Ralph Hudson, arranging that whichever of them died first should appear to the survivor to let him know he had entered the spirit world.

Hudson was the first to die, abroad.

One evening at this same time, John Fermoy was looking out of the window of his sitting-room when he saw a man come up the garden path. It was a bright moonlight night, and the man's face was clearly defined. To Fermoy's astonishment it was that of Ralph Hudson, whom he had not seen for several years.

He went to the front door to welcome Hudson, but there was

no one to be seen. He called out, "Hudson, Hudson, where are you?" There was no reply. He called again, but still there was no response. He went into the garden and searched around, but there was no sign of Hudson.

Thinking it very strange, he made a note of the hour and day that he had seen Hudson. A few days later he received a letter from Mrs. Hudson saying her husband had died suddenly—the very time Fermoy had seen his apparition come up the garden path.

THE STRANGLING OAK OF NANNAU WOODS

A FEW miles north of Dolgelly, the county town of Merionethshire, North Wales, in a beautifully wooded park, lies Nannau Mansion, the ancient seat of the Vaughan family.

About the end of the fourteenth century or beginning of the fifteenth there lived at Nannau a Welsh chieftain called Howel Sele. He had many relatives, among them a cousin, the famous Owen Glendower, who lived not very far away. Unfortunately, however, between the two there was a very bitter animosity; some said owing to rivalry in the field of sport—archery, quarterstaff and the like—and others to a love affair, Howel being jealous of his cousin, towards whom he thought his wife showed too friendly a spirit.

Their mutual dislike was well known and it grieved no one more than the Abbot of Kymmer, who was fond of them both. The Abbot had often planned how he could effect a reconciliation between them, and at last one day he made a bold attempt at it.

Without giving either man a hint as to what was in his mind he invited them to dine with him. Neither suspecting, of course, that his enemy was coming, they both appeared, and for a short while the worthy Abbot had a very anxious time of it.

In the end, however, he managed to pacify them, and before they left his presence the hatchet was apparently buried, and they seemed to be on the best of terms. A few days later Howel invited Owen to the chase—a day's deer hunting—and the two, accompanied by several of their respective retainers, went off together to the woods around Nannau. Pursuing quarry hour after hour, through sunny glade and cool, shadowy dell, the two cousins suddenly found themselves side by side in a small clearing.

"Hush!" Owen whispered, touching his kinsman lightly on the

arm, "do you see that doe over there? Prove your prowess by shooting it."

He pointed, as he spoke, to a brown object, half hidden by bushes and high waving grass, a dozen or so yards ahead of them. Howel, at once fitting an arrow to his bow, was apparently taking aim in the direction indicated when suddenly, without the slightest warning, he swung round and discharged the missile full at Owen's breast.

Owen, luckily, had under his shirt a coat of mail, and the arrow glanced off it. Roused to a fury by this act of treachery he at once drew his sword and Howel fell, mortally wounded. Before dying he cursed Owen, telling him he would never enjoy a moment's peace again and that he would haunt him and his heirs forever.

Glendower realised that to make the incident public would mean the beginning of a feud between the Seles and Glendowers which might easily lead to a civil war in Wales and thus result in a national catastrophe. Yet, to keep it dark was something out of keeping with his character. In a land where all men at that period were deemed valiant, he was rightly regarded as being a great warrior, a most perfect gentleman, and the last person to do anything at all underhand.

His dilemma was solved by the sudden arrival of Madog, a bosom friend, who, seeing the danger in which Owen stood, at once suggested hiding Howel's body in the hollow trunk of a great oak tree that stood near by.

This tree had a very sinister appearance. It was not only blackened and scorched, where it had been once struck by lightning, but its widespreading, knotted and gnarled branches bore a peculiar resemblance to the malshaped arms of a human being. It was known and shunned for this reason, though hitherto there were no substantial grounds for associating it with the supernatural. Yielding to the persuasions of his friend, Owen Glendower caught hold of the bleeding corpse and between them they carried it to the oak and dropped it in the hollow.

Next day, as Howel had not returned home, a great search was made for him. All Nannau and the surrounding country was scoured, but, although caves, bushes and ditches were examined, no one thought of looking in the hollow of the notorious oak. Some thought he had fallen down some well or into some obscure pit, others that he had been drowned while attempting to ford the swift and treacherous River Mawddach; others, again, that he had

been seized and carried off either by brigands or by a band of marauding English soldiers.

Time passed, and Howel's fate became one of those mysteries that the whole countryside sat to discuss on dark nights before a roaring fire.

In the meantime, however, some strange stories began to circulate. Close to Nannau was a hill called Moel Offrwm, and more than one person crossing it after dusk testified to seeing the shadowy form of Howel Sele standing by the wayside, his corpse-like face scowling. One peasant declared that he was pursued for more than a mile by the figure, which followed him persistently through briars, brushwood and water, only leaving him when he came within sight of a church.

Phenomena were encountered, too, on the rugged slopes of Cader Idris. One stalwart farmer stated that when he went to look for his cattle one night on the sides of the mountain he saw pale lights of a nasty bluish-green hue flitting in and out of the boulders.

Thinking they must be Canhywllam Cyrth, or Corpse Candles (spirits in the shape of candle flames that appear to some Welsh people before the death of a relative), he stood rooted to the ground with fear, staring open-mouthed at them.

Then, quite suddenly, the lights came together, taking at first the form of a huge flame, and almost immediately afterwards that of a man, gigantic and shadowy. The farmer was terrified, for he recognised in the shape that towered above him the features and figure of the missing Lord of Nannau, Howel Sele.

The expression on the apparition's face was dreadful. The eyebrows scowled diabolically, the mouth was contracted into a savage snarl, while the eyes blazed with a hate that the wretched farmer felt could only owe its origin to Hell.

Raising one hand, the figure was in the act of striking the farmer, when the latter instinctively crossed himself and muttered a prayer. The moment he did this the whole expression and attitude of the apparition changed. Fear and dread, a dread that was really terrible to see, seemed to sweep through it, and turning on its heels with a gesture of despair, it glided away.

As it went, winding its way in and out of the huge black boulders that lay scattered in all directions on the mountain side, a dull and melancholy wind rose suddenly and, tossing the branches of the naked trees against the starlit sky, flew after the figure like one lost soul following another.

The farmer, having at length recovered his faculties, made for home with all speed.

Among others who witnessed strange phenomena were Howel's aged nurse, who had been devoted to him, and his venerable steward. Tradition says that both these two frequently used to see a tall, spectral figure, which they recognised as their lost master, in the grounds of Nannau, though never once in their experience did it actually enter the house. Sometimes, when they were sitting in one of the rooms on the ground floor, they saw a white haggard face appear at a window and look in at them, angrily, until they prayed or uttered some pious exclamation, when it at once became sorrowful and withdrew with a groan or sigh.

At other times, when they were looking out of their windows at night they would see it peering up at the house from among the trees, and, perhaps, wringing its hands and going through all the antics and gesticulations of a lost soul. The idea conveyed to them both by its appearance and behaviour was that it was damned, and labouring under some dreadful curse.

But it was the oak tree itself, in which the body of Howel was hidden, that was the worst haunted. No horse ever passed it, either in the daytime or at night, without shying, while all kinds of phenomena were seen and heard in its immediate vicinity. Sometimes uncanny lights were seen hovering in its branches, while at others awful moans and groans were heard to proceed from it.

A party of haymakers passing the tree on their way home one night declared that they heard a voice cry out, apparently from its trunk: "I'm cursed! I'm cursed! So are ye all!"

Knowing the tree and its evil reputation only too well they did not dally to investigate but fled panic-stricken.

As for Owen Glendower, though he knew there was ample justification for his having fought with Howel, and even excuse for his having killed him, he could not get the vision of his cousin's bleeding corpse from his mind. It haunted him day and night.

Often at night Owen awoke with a start to hear, or fancy he heard, a voice whisper from the darkness, "Accursed!" He recognised the voice as Howel's. The feeling that he actually was cursed grew on him, and he became seized with a deep melancholy. Still, something always held him back when he felt impelled to disclose his dread secret.

At last, after ten years of torment, he finally succumbed to an

illness. Just before he died he sent for the faithful Madog and bade him hie away to Howel's widow and tell her the entire truth.

Promising to do as requested, Madog set off at once to Nannau, and Glendower, feeling that the curse had been removed from him, breathed his last.

True to his trust, Madog sought Howel's widow and gave her a detailed account of her husband's death. A party of retainers was at once sent with him to the oak and the truth of his story was speedily established by the discovery of the armour-clad skeleton.

But though the skeleton was taken to the chapel of Nannau, where prayers were said over it, most recorders of the grim tragedy maintain that the priestly efforts were in vain. There is a saying that curses not infrequently have a habit of recoiling on the heads of those who utter them, and this would appear to have been so in the case of Howel Sele.

The spirit of Owen Glendower troubled no one, though Sele had declared it should know no rest, but with Sele's own spirit it was otherwise. The blasted oak still continued to moan and groan and yield other phenomena that seemed unquestionably to be associated with the Lord of Nannau.

One of the most extraordinary stories, vouched for by the local peasantry, concerned the evil power of the oak to kill those straying into its grip. Half a dozen men were found dead at its base with marks around their throats as though they had been strangled. In one story at least there was an eye-witness of what was alleged to have occurred.

Two travellers were making their way through the Nannau Woods when they were overtaken by darkness. They decided to spend the night at the base of a great oak which, although they did not much like its appearance, promised the best shelter about. After their supper they stretched themselves out and went to sleep.

One of the travellers awakened from a dreadful nightmare. He had dreamed that from the trunk of the tree under which he slept long knotted arms had begun to drop. At their ends were smaller branches that looked like grotesque hands. And these uncanny arms and hands crept slowly down and down toward him while he lay helpless in terror. Just as they were about to touch him he managed to awaken and with a scream rolled away, leaped to his feet and fled.

He ran perhaps fifty paces, and then this terror of what had seemed a too vivid dream dropped from him. He stopped, shamefacedly, and looked back, wondering if he had awakened his companion.

To his amazement he saw that his companion was apparently climbing up the trunk of the oak. Then, as he looked closer, he saw that his comrade seemed to be enmeshed in its branches.

At this moment clouds which had half-veiled the moon drifted away and he then saw that a branch of the tree was actually wound around his comrade's neck, while stronger branches held him firmly clasped to the bole itself. And in the weird light of the moon a huge, evil, grotesque face seemed to gleam out from the trunk, staring with malevolent eyes upon the contorted face of the strangling man!

The sight was too much for the traveller. He fled in earnest now, stumbling at dawn into the village, where he told his story. When the sun was up he led a party back to where he had slept.

There, at the base of the tree, lay the body of his comrade. He had been strangled to death. The neck was bruised and on his body were cuts as though great claws had torn him.

So sinister became the tree's reputation that it was at last ordered to be cut down and burned.

However, its site for many years remained haunted and a peril to anyone who ventured near after nightfall.

THE MURDERS ON THE CRUMBLES

LONG before Patrick Mahon murdered his mistress Emily Kaye, in a rented bungalow on the Crumbles, this lonely stretch of beach near Eastbourne, in Sussex, was haunted.

Some friends of mine who stayed in the locality for a short time told me they had authentic information regarding the haunting. Their informants, a married couple, had on several occasions seen in broad daylight the apparition of a man in the uniform of a coastguard climb in over the window-sill of the bungalow sitting-room, and cross the floor to enter the room leading out of the sitting-room.

He vanished invariably and inexplicably in the inner room of the empty bungalow.

Though I made many enquiries, there was no information to be had regarding a possible reason for this haunting.

After this, in the early 1920s, the Crumbles became notorious for two headline murders; the savage battering to death of Irene Munro, a London typist, and the gruesome despatch of his mistress, Emily Kaye, by Patrick Mahon.

In August, 1920, pretty young Irene Munro went to Eastbourne for a fortnight's holiday, alone. She took a room at 393 Seaside, the district of Eastbourne beyond which lies the Crumbles. On August 19 she was seen with two men in grey suits in the vicinity of the Crumbles; the next afternoon her cruelly battered body, robbed of the little money she possessed, was found by a school-boy, buried under the shingle.

William Gray and Jack Field, two unemployed men known to the police as bad characters, were tried and convicted of her murder, and were hanged together at Wandsworth Prison in February, 1921.

Three years later on this fateful beach, Patrick Mahon murdered his mistress.

Emily Kaye was a London woman with money who became fascinated with Mahon, a vain and unscrupulous married man. He was reluctant to continue the affair and she suggested a "love experiment"—that they should live together on trial—and drew his attention to an advertisement for a bungalow to let on the Crumbles. Mahon rented it for two months under the name of Waller.

There, in April, 1924, he murdered her, having bought some of the instruments he used beforehand, and sealed her in a cabin trunk while entertaining, a few nights later, another woman he had invited to the bungalow. He then remained about the place for days, destroying Emily Kaye's body. He hacked the flesh into pieces with a carving knife, sawed up the bones, boiled the remains and burned the head in a stove, breaking the skull-bones to bits and throwing them away on the shingle.

He also disposed of some pieces of the body by dropping them from the train on the way to Reading, and it was the discovery of his gladstone bag, which he had deposited at Waterloo Station, which brought him to justice. It contained bloodstained clothing in which the pieces had been wrapped, and the knife.

Mahon was also hanged at Wandsworth Prison.

I stayed one night in the Crumbles bungalow while he was awaiting execution. Except for the removal of boards by the police (bits and pieces of the corpse were found at the bungalow) the sitting-room was just as it had been when Mahon left the place.

It was a weird experience, though as hour after hour passed I neither heard nor saw anything supernatural.

Nothing occurred till dawn broke. Then the grey rays of early morning seemed to focus on the aperture in the floor, where the police had been searching for clues or remains. I then saw emanating from the hole a gruesome light, which may have been due to vegetable decay. Whatever the cause of it, it had a very chilling effect on me. I sensed a presence of evil near me but saw nothing beyond that eerie light. I was glad when the hour for my departure arrived.

I also spent a night on the Crumbles near the spot where poor Irene Munro was murdered. Again, at about four o'clock in the morning, I saw an eerie light rise up from the shingle, and again was conscious of an evil presence or presences near me for a time. They went with the advent of sunlight.

Whatever new manifestations of the supernatural the two shocking murders may have brought to the place, the Crumbles is well known to have been haunted long before the pitiful death of Irene Munro. Skeletons have from time to time been found there.

PHANTOM VEHICLES

A FATAL accident to a motorist alleged to have been caused by the appearance of a phantom lorry on the road near Hyde, in Cheshire, aroused renewed interest in phenomena representing inanimate objects.

"I can understand living things such as humans, quadrupeds and birds, and even fish and insects, in fact all things that have life, appearing on this earth as ghosts," a woman writer remarked to me, "but surely it is impossible for non-sentient, non-sensitive, and utterly lifeless objects such as trains or motor-cars to appear, since they obviously don't possess anything in the nature of a spirit."

Well, of course, she had a point; but all the same it is a well-established fact that the super-physical does at times manifest itself in the form of ships, motor-cars and trains, and I think those who have really experienced ghostly happenings will agree that the constitution of such phenomena is at present, even to the most enlightened and scientifically minded, merely a matter of hypothesis and speculation.

It should not be forgotten, however, that because these phenomena that we term ghostly appear to us to be super-physical—that is to say, without any satisfactory explanation on purely material and natural grounds—they will always remain so. A day may come when at least a certain percentage of them may be found to come just as much within the scope of ordinary human understanding and everyday science as the wireless and television.

The truth is that until we exhaust the possibilities of mental concentration, conscious and unconscious, of abnormalities of mind and of ether and atmospheric effects, we cannot make with any degree of arbitrariness a classification of ghostly phenomena, whether representative of animate or inanimate objects, or say

definitely whether such phenomena are, or are not, of a world exclusively relegated to spirits.

There may be something in connection with certain of them as, for example, those which would seem only to demonstrate prior to a death or some catastrophe, which would lead us to suppose they do actually hail from such a sphere, but we cannot say for certain; we can, at most, only surmise. Hence my reply to those who ask the very common question of how a motor lorry or other inanimate object can possibly have a ghost or spirit, would be that no one can definitely or authoritatively assume that phenomena in the form of such objects are ghosts; one can only say definitely and authoritatively that they have been proved to be immaterial.

A shadow is immaterial, but it is not necessarily a ghost.

With regard to phantom vehicles, be they what they may, entities hailing from the super-physical or phenomena explicable on some at present unknown physical basis, they are not uncommon.

For a long time the road between Rugby and Coventry was periodically haunted by a phantom lorry that emerged from a hedge and, crossing the road, vanished quite inexplicably into the hedge opposite; while a phenomenon resembling a motor coach has been seen, from time to time, on the road between Lamberhurst and Frant, on the Kent-Sussex border. The latter, unlike so many phantoms, does not confine its appearances to the night but apparently is seen quite as often during the day.

Only recently it appeared in broad daylight to three motorists, collectively. They saw it ahead of them, standing motionless by the wayside, and did not realise there was anything strange about it till it suddenly vanished. As there was no gap in the hedge, no side-turning or other outlet to account for its abrupt disappearance, they could only conclude that it was super-physical.

Another daylight haunting by a vehicle is said to occur periodically on the main road between Swindon and Hungerford. The spot where the phenomena would seem most often to appear is close to the summit of a slight hill. On either side the road is meadow-land protected by a barbed-wire fence. Recently a party of motorists ascending this hill in daylight saw what they took to be a private car cross the road in front of them and then suddenly disappear. They were all looking at it one moment, and the next merely gazing into space.

Utterly unable to explain the phenomenon, for the barbed-wire fence by the roadside was perfectly intact, they drove on, thrilled with the idea that they had at last and in very truth seen a ghost.

Recently considerable sensation was aroused in the neighbourhood of Bath owing to stories told by certain lorry-drivers of strange happenings on the road between Banford and Salisbury. It seems that some time ago this road was the scene of a serious motor-car accident, and ever since then it is alleged to have been haunted not only by the phantoms of the people who were killed in the accident, but by the phantom of their car as well.

Drivers of lorries declare that, when passing the spot where this tragedy occurred, they have heard harrowing screams and groans, and at the same time have seen a much-damaged car that has invariably and quite unaccountably vanished on their approaching close to it. A driver on one occasion hearing cries, looked on the ground and, seeing in the moonlight the livid face of a dead man staring at him, was so startled that he fainted; while on another occasion a driver at the same spot felt something icy cold touch his hand, the hand that steered, and, on glancing down, saw to his horror a bloody hand close beside his own.

All these experiences were narrated at the time in the Press and corroborated by people living in the haunted district.

The story of a phantom locomotive was told me years ago by a railway porter at Keynsham, near Bristol. He declared that, when on duty at Keynsham station, he, together with one or two of the other porters, had repeatedly seen a phantom engine pass through the station in the direction of the tunnel between Keynsham and Bristol.

This phenomenon did not always occur at night; it was sometimes seen in broad daylight. The porter and his mates would be standing on the platform talking, perhaps waiting for the next train, when suddenly an engine would appear on the line, coming fairly swiftly towards them. It made no sound whatever, but passed through the station in absolute silence, while the driver turned slowly round and looked at the men on the platform with a very pale face and troubled expression.

My informant said that once either the driver or fireman of an engine had fallen off in the tunnel under very mysterious circumstances and been killed, and that the phantom engine was thought to owe its origin to that tragedy.

The haunting has, apparently, ceased; but maybe only temporarily, for it often happens that the same psychic phenomenon occurs time after time in rapid succession and then abruptly ceases, to re-occur in the same way years later. However, it is just as impossible to say when the same haunting will occur again as it is to say exactly how many times it will reappear, as

all hauntings are more or less intermittent, and in my opinion they may go on thus for ever.

A train-haunting no less interesting occurred in the seventies of the last century at Newark, in the United States. Regularly, about the same hour every day, a phantom engine used to be heard approaching the station and dash shrieking and whistling through it. People came from all parts to hear the phenomenon, as many as six or seven hundred experiencing it at a time.

All attempts to explain away the phenomenon on natural grounds failed, and it was generally agreed in the end that it was super-physical, that is to say, due to some ghostly agency. It ceased as abruptly as it had begun, and up to the present has never re-occurred.

From ghost trains to something new: the ghost aeroplane. I have on record what I believe to be the only case in Britain of a phantom plane.

It was brought to my notice only recently by a woman who told me that when flying in Gloucestershire, both she and her pilot had seen the ghost plane. It came swiftly towards them from a distance, and, when in line but slightly above them, suddenly vanished.

The sky was absolutely clear at the time; there was not the vestige of a cloud, nothing that could in any way explain the phenomenon, which they could only account for on the basis of the super-physical.

I see no logical reason why the air should not be haunted by phantom vehicles just as badly as the soil and the sea.

There are, of course, many stories of phantom ships seen on the world's oceans, though some hauntings around the coasts of Britain are not so widely known. Among the British cases of a phantom ship is that of the Rotterdam, a fine vessel full of passengers that sank off the north-east coast of Scotland with the loss of every person on board. Her phantom is still to be seen at times about the spot where she perished.

Many years ago a ship was wrecked through malice in the Solway. She contained a bridal party whose ghosts are visible on the deck when the phantom of the ship appears before a wreck.

The phantoms of two pirate ships are also seen at times in the Solway. The pirates, on account of their many crimes, are fated to haunt the Solway till Doomsday.

There is a well known instance of a phantom ship in St. Ives Bay, Cornwall. One day in the last century, light signals of distress were seen coming from a ship in the bay and a boat at

once pulled out towards her. The crew of the ship were plainly visible on deck. The rescue boat drew alongside her and a man with a boat-hook stood ready to board her. He launched his boat-hook to clutch the vessel's side, but to his amazement it touched nothing, and the ship vanished, to reappear in another part of the bay.

The crew of the boat knew then the vessel was the notorious phantom ship. A day or two later there was a storm and a ship was wrecked in the bay; the appearance of the phantom ship always preceded a maritime disaster.

There are other ghost ships reputed to appear off the Cornish coast, and even the shore has its phantoms. Sennen Cove is haunted by a grey band of mist called the Hooper or Hooter. Its appearance is a warning to sailors not to put to sea.

Once, an old seaman in a fit of bravado declared he would beat the Hooper away when it manifested itself. The daunting mist appeared, and accompanied by some young men he beat his way out to sea through it, but a storm arose and he and his young companions were all drowned.

Along the coast of South Wales there is a strong belief in a haunted ship, and in hauntings by the spirits of the drowned. Ghost lights are seen before a drowning calamity.

THE DANCE OF THE BAT

SEVERAL theatres are haunted. Drury Lane Theatre is haunted by the ghost of a man clad in 18th century costume. It appears during the day as well as at night, and has often been seen.

The Haymarket Theatre is said to be haunted by the ghost of a former owner; the Gaiety Theatre had a haunted room.

The Bath Theatre is claimed to be haunted by the ghost of a woman in a grey dress, while the Old Theatre, Bristol, is rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of Mrs. Siddons.

A provincial repertory theatre which, although it has now been pulled down, I must call the Lavinia Theatre, had the strangest story of a theatre haunting that has come to my knowledge. It was hearing that the theatre was haunted which inspired Mr. Eric Cross (not his real name), member of a local group of psychical researchers, with the idea of holding a night vigil there.

Cross was rather doubtful that he would be given permission for his experiment, but after some hesitation on the part of the owner he finally obtained it. He subsequently went alone to the theatre at eleven o'clock one late October night, the night watchman letting him in.

"You will find it very lonesome sitting all by yourself in the theatre at night," the watchman said.

"I don't mind that," Cross said. "Is there any truth in the rumours that the theatre is haunted?"

"Well," the watchman replied, "they do say it is, and I've heard things here that are hard to believe. Round about two o'clock is the time the noises sometimes come. Where do you want to sit?"

"Oh, anywhere in the auditorium, about midway."

"Very good," the watchman said. "Follow me."

He led Cross to a seat in the middle of the auditorium. "You want a light, don't you?" he asked.

"No," Cross said. "I want to sit in the dark. I have a torch."

The watchman looked at him as if he thought him a very queer being. "Well, I shall be somewhere about if you want me," he said.

Cross had no idea how lonely and deserted a theatre could feel till he heard the watchman's receding footsteps and found himself alone in the dark in the big empty auditorium. There was, he reported, an uncomfortable eerie feeling. It was some consolation to feel his torch. As the minutes went by till midnight he heard certain creakings and jarrings which he attributed to natural causes.

As it drew near to two o'clock he sensed presences all around him. The auditorium seemed to be full of invisible beings.

Gradually something began to form on the bare stage, the curtains of which had, at his request, been left open, and for the first time Cross experienced a pang of terror. What was he about to see? Very slowly the something on the stage took shape. It was, he said, the fantastically dressed figure of a girl, her head crowned with the head of a bat. On her shoulders were bat-like wings. A weird light surrounded her as she fleetingly danced a strange, grotesque dance.

The girl's face was so hidden by her head-dress that Cross could not distinguish it. Her dance ended abruptly and she disappeared, swallowed up in the darkness of the back of the stage. Her place was rapidly filled by the spectral figures of two men engaged in a duel. The same weird light enveloped them.

Cross then saw leaning out of one of the boxes nearest to the stage the startlingly white face of what looked like a clown. And, leaning forward, gazing intently at the duellers from a seat adjoining the lowest boxes, was a dark haired girl, in whose eyes was an expression of the most deadly hatred.

In one hand she held a pistol, and levelling it at one of the duellers, she fired. There was the hollow, reverberating sound of a report, and all the phantoms vanished.

The darkness of the theatre, suddenly returned, seemed like a physical blow to his smarting eyes, Cross recalled, so that he was some moments recovering from the double shock. He then flashed his torch around, and, finding a light switch, turned it on.

He had sat down again, still too unnerved by what he had seen to consider his next move, when the watchman reappeared.

"Had enough of it, sir?" he enquired.

"Yes, more than enough," Cross replied. Guardedly he told the watchman a little of what he had seen.

"The governor will be very interested," the watchman said. "Bar the shape of the woman it's more than I or anyone else has ever seen."

Cross then saw Mr. B., the owner of the theatre, and narrated his experience to him. Mr. B., until now quite sceptical of Cross's vigil, was profoundly interested.

"Forty years ago," he said "there was a mysterious happening here. A play called 'The Bat of the Astral Mountains' was on, and the principals in it were John Vane, Richard Ellis, Dulcie Bourne, Vera Carter, and Robert Dean. Vane and Ellis were both very much in love with Dulcie Bourne, who was the Bat. She did a wonderful dance as the Bat. One of her understudies was Vera Carter, who was believed to be in love with John Vane.

"One night when Vane and Ellis were engaged in a duel on the stage, Vane was shot and killed. Robert Dean, who played the part of a clown, and was known to be on bad terms with Vane, was suspected. He was proved to have threatened Vane, but there was not enough evidence to warrant his arrest. Andre Lahin, Vane's understudy, took his part, and did so well that the play, in spite of the tragic happening, proved a success.

"From what you tell me you saw it looks as if Dean was innocent. I have a photograph in one of my stage albums of Vera Carter. Will you look at it and see if it resembles the girl who fired the pistol?"

He found the photograph and showed it to Cross. Cross identified it at once as the girl who had fired. Her features were the same, well formed, with the dark eyes a little too close together.

"But why should she have killed Vane?" Cross asked.

"That must remain a mystery," Mr. B. said. "Possibly she had been very much in love with Vane. Vane had rejected her, and furious with his treatment of her and rather than he should marry Dulcie Bourne, she had killed him."

Cross wrote down the account of his night's vigil, and Mr. B. (independently) his own comments made at the time, just as I have stated. Mr. B. was satisfied that it was impossible for Cross, a young man, to have had intimate knowledge of the plays and players at the Lavinia Theatre so many years before.

WHITE LADIES: AND THE HEADLESS

THE grey-white wraiths of female phantoms have long been a popular feature of ghost tales, though in fact they far outnumber their fictional counterparts. They have been seen to appear with varying degrees of clarity, from shadowy indistinctness to a very full and detailed gleaming white figure.

Blenkinsopp Castle, in Northumberland, is haunted by a White Lady; a great treasure is supposed to have been buried there in the days of the Crusades. Bridge End House, Burnley, Crook Hall near Durham, and Waddow Hall, Yorkshire, all have their White Lady ghosts. The one at Waddow Hall is called Peg O'Neil.

White Ladies do not haunt only castles and some stately homes. The old rectory at Market Lavington, Wiltshire, pulled down some years ago, was haunted by a White Lady, the ghost of a woman murdered in the house, while the road leading from Market Lavington to Easterton was haunted by a phantom woman in white known as the Easterton ghost.

A curious story is told of the White Lady of Skipsea, Yorkshire. A woman sent one of her servants one day to some friends living some distance away. The servant was riding on his way when his horse started suddenly, nearly unseating him. He looked around to see what had scared the animal, and saw walking by the head of his horse a woman in a white dress.

Although his horse began to go fast, the woman kept pace with it. She continued walking by the horse till they reached Skipsea, when she suddenly vanished. The servant, much frightened, delivered his message and rode hard for home.

At Barton Hall, near Bath, two sisters, May and Mary Dean, who were guests there had retired to bed one night; May was actually in bed, while Mary was looking for something in the chest of drawers, when the door opened and a woman entered the room.

Without looking to see who it was, May called out, "Is that

you, Mary?" Whereupon Mary turned, saw the intruder, gave a loud shriek of terror and fell on to the bed in a semi-faint.

May jumped out of bed and followed the intruder, who went into the dressing-room, closing the door behind her. May at once opened the door but the room was empty; the mysterious intruder had inexplicably vanished.

Considerably mystified, May returned to Mary, who explained the reason for her terror. The strange woman, she said, had no features on her face, which was just a white, gleaming oval.

A cottage not far from Farleigh, in Somerset, and the ground in its vicinity are reputed to be haunted by the ghost of a little woman in a long grey dress and an old fashioned bonnet. The ghost is supposed to be that of a woman who once lived in the cottage and was greatly attached to it.

All female phantoms, of course, do not appear as grey or white figures. Holt Castle, in Worcestershire, is said to be haunted by a Black Lady who glides through the building in the dead of night. A cellar in this castle was long supposed to be haunted by a very aggressive ghost of a raven.

At Netherby Hall, in Cumberland, there is a ghost known as the Rustling Lady, whose dress rustles as she moves at night along the corridors and through the rooms of the old house.

The beach at St. Ives, Cornwall, is reputed to have been once haunted by the ghost of a woman with a lantern. According to a story in explanation of the haunting, a woman was formerly saved from a wreck but her child was drowned. After her death her ghost is believed to have been seen hunting at midnight for the body of her child.

On the north coast of Cornwall there is a haunted rock known as Madge Figg's Chair. Madge Figg took part in robbing the victims of the wreckers. Among them on one occasion was a woman wearing precious stones, and Madge Figg robbed the dead woman, whose ghost afterwards haunted the rock on which Madge Figg used to sit watching for wrecks.

Mickle, the Scottish poet, wrote these verses about Cumnor Hall, in Berkshire, the site of which is supposed to be haunted by the ghost of Lady Ann Robsart, who was murdered there in the reign of Queen Elizabeth:

"In that manor now no more
Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball
For ever since that dreary hour,
Have spirits haunted Cumnor Hall.

The village maids, with fearful glance
Avoid the ancient moss-grown wall;
Nor ever lead the merry dance
Among the groves of Cumnor Hall.

Full many a traveller oft hath sighed
And pensive wept the Countess's fall,
As wandering around they espied
The haunted towers of Cumnor Hall."

Then there are the headless phantoms. For many years, a country mansion near the old village of Combe St. Winifred, in Devon, was haunted by the ghost of a headless woman clad in the dress of a bygone age. Every night, usually about 2 a.m., it glided along the passages and corridors, pausing every now and then to tap on doors. Sometimes it entered rooms, approached the people in bed and roused them by placing an icy hand on their foreheads.

One of the sleepers who was thus awakened had the temerity to rise and follow the ghost. It took him to a cellar, pointed to a certain spot in the stone-flagged floor, and vanished. In the morning the spot in the floor that the ghost had indicated was dug up and some hidden valuables discovered there.

The haunting by the same ghost continued until someone again followed it, and it revealed more "treasure", after which it never appeared again.

Drumlanrig Castle, in Dumfriesshire, was at one time haunted by a headless phantom woman supposed to be the Duchess of Queensberry, while a headless woman in white still haunts cross-roads, where a murderer was buried, two miles from Wenlock on the Bridgnorth Road.

A well known story is told of a haunted field at Great Melton, Norfolk, close to the Old Norwich Road.

Many years ago a bridal party returning home along the Old Norwich Road met with an appalling accident; they and their carriage were thrown into a deep pit, with the result they were all killed. For years afterwards at midnight a carriage drawn by headless horses, with a headless coachman and footman, containing headless ladies in white used to be seen rising from the pit and driving round the large field. This done it sank into the pit and vanished.

At Dalton, near Thirsk, there was some years ago a barn reputed to be haunted. A tramp who went to sleep in the barn one night was roused from his slumber by the luminous ghost of a woman

holding her head in her hands. Terrified, he crashed out of the barn and fled.

Within recent years a man was driving a wagon along a lane at Ellesmere, Shropshire, when the phantom of a headless woman suddenly appeared near a spot where a suicide was known to be buried. The horses of the wagon took fright and pitched the driver into Drumby Hole, a dismal spot with an eerie reputation. He died very soon afterwards.

Other headless phantoms abound. The region around Skipsea, haunted by its White Lady, is also visited by a headless man on a phantom horse, while years ago a headless ghost haunted the streets of Preston and the neighbouring lanes.

Holland House is reputed to be haunted by a ghost that is headless. According to a well known tradition the phantom of the first Lord Holland issues at midnight from a secret hideaway in the Gilt room and wanders around the house. There are spots of blood on one side of the place from which he issues that cannot be effaced.

There was a story current a few years ago that at times at midnight in the village of Acton, Suffolk, a coach with headless horses, coachman and footmen was seen to drive very fast from the park to a place called the nursery-corner, where centuries before a battle was fought. A similar phantom coach, with headless coachman, footmen and horses haunts the grounds and adjoining region of Caistor Castle, in Norfolk.

It is said that the headless ghost of Sir Jocelyn Percy drives four headless horses above the streets of Beverley, Yorkshire, on a certain night in the year at midnight, as punishment for an act of sacrilege. Also on certain nights of the year, the approach to Langley Hall, near Durham, is haunted by a phantom coach with headless horses, coachman and footmen.

The headless ghost of a man who murdered his children at a house at Hampton Wood, near Ellesmere, appears at times in the grounds of the house.

In Warwickshire, a man was driving a trap one night along a country road when his horse suddenly shied, stood still, trembling all over, and then set off at a great speed. Looking round to see what had startled the horse, the driver saw the phantom of a headless man walking alongside the trap. No matter how fast the trap went the ghost kept pace with it without seeming to walk any faster. When the trap arrived at a turning in the road where an atrocious murder had been committed, the phantom suddenly vanished.

The horse at once resumed its normal pace and took the driver home without anything further happening.

A well known story is that of Walter Caverley, who in a fit of frenzy murdered his children and attempted to kill his wife. For these crimes he was pressed to death. His phantom, riding a headless horse, has often been seen in the vicinity of his home. According to a tradition in the neighbourhood he was buried in the churchyard near his home, and boys used to go to the churchyard and call out "Old Caverley, old Caverley, unless thee appears we'll cut thee into callops and seize thee by the ears."

On one occasion while the boys were shouting these words the church door opened and the ghost of Caverley without his head actually appeared. The terrified boys fled and never ventured near the churchyard again.

A family in Limerick have as their ghost a phantom carriage drawn by headless horses. One Christmas Eve when the family were gathered together in the sitting-room, sounds of a carriage were heard. As they were not expecting anyone and the hour was late they wondered who it could be. Nearer and nearer came the sound of wheels—they could even hear the cracking of the driver's whip. Right up the drive the carriage came at a fast rate, never pausing till it reached the front door. There was then a loud rapping. One of the girls went to the window, gave a cry and fainted.

The carriage drove away, and the girl on recovering told how she had seen at the door a coach with headless horses, a headless coachman and headless footmen. Within a few days the family heard that someone closely related to them had suddenly died.

Finally, there is the following story of a well known haunted family.

Three sisters, Lily, Rose and Ruth Webster, went on a visit one year to their uncle, Robert Webster, in Canada. He lived in a house standing in extensive grounds near a river.

One evening when the family were in the sitting-room, sounds of wheels were heard. A carriage and four was coming up the drive. It was too late for visitors and the girls wondered who it could be. The vehicle was coming at a great pace, they could hear the crunch of gravel in the drive. The vehicle came right up to the house and there was a loud knocking at the front door.

The girls remembered that there was no knocker on the door. Their uncle warned them not to look out of the window, and kneeling down prayed for deliverance from evil forces. In spite of his warning, Rose looked out of the window and saw to her horror

a great hearse-like carriage with four headless horses and a headless coachman.

She did not faint but she was terribly shocked. The carriage remained at the door for a few moments and then drove away.

The girls asked their uncle what was the meaning of the phantom carriage, and why it had come, but he would not say. He begged them never to mention the phantom coach again.

A few nights later Lily woke with a start to see a tall hooded figure in black glide across the floor and bend over Rose's bed. Rose was fast asleep. The figure remained stationary for some seconds then glided out of the room.

Lily spent the rest of the night with her head under the clothes.

A few days after this the three girls were in the garden. They were walking along a path, chattering and laughing, when Lily sensed that someone was following them. She looked around, and was terrified to see the hooded figure in black. It stretched out a long arm and touched Rose and Ruth on the back. It then turned and moved away with long strides and abruptly disappeared.

The following week the girls returned home and within a month Rose and Ruth were the victims of an epidemic and died.

PHANTOMS OF THE LIVING

WRAITHS or 'fetches' are immaterial doubles of living people. In some cases they occur through projection. A person arrives consciously or unconsciously at a certain degree of intense concentration which results in projection taking place; that is to say, his immaterial ego leaves his natural body and travels to the place he is thinking about.

There is no doubt that some cases of alleged haunting are due to projection, or phantoms of the living. In other cases they belong to an unknown class of spirits, often prognosticators of death.

According to the historian Miss Strickland, Lady Guildford, who was attending Queen Elizabeth in her fatal illness in Richmond Palace, saw Elizabeth's immaterial double one day.

Lady Guildford had left the Queen in a coma in her bed and had gone out of the sick chamber to get a little fresh air, when she saw the Queen walking in one of the corridors. Hardly able to credit her sight, she hastened to the sick chamber and found the Queen still in the state of coma or lethargic slumber. Not long afterwards the Queen died.

What Lady Guildford saw was the immaterial double of Elizabeth belonging to the category of mystery spirits.

According to John Aubrey, Lady Diana Rich was walking one morning before eleven o'clock in the garden of her father, the Earl of Holland, when she met her phantom double looking and dressed exactly like herself. About a month later she died of small-pox. Her sister, Lady Isabella Thynne, also saw her phantom double shortly before her death.

Catherine the Great's phantom was also seen. She was in a State apartment in her palace one day when one of her ladies-in-waiting saw her seated in one of the other rooms. She told Catherine, who went at once to the room named, and saw the double of herself seated in an armchair.

She ordered one of the guards to fire at the phantom. He obeyed. The shot had no effect but after a little while the phantom vanished. It was not significant of anything ill.

Mr. E. Bennett, a former secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, in his book of ghostly happenings gives an account of the appearance of an immaterial double at the British Museum.

Mr. Forbes-Winslow, the well known London coroner, made an appointment with a gentleman who for convenience sake I will call Mr. Hill, to meet him the following day at eleven o'clock in the reading room of the British Museum. Mr. Forbes-Winslow went to the museum the following day at the appointed time and asked the man at the stock office if he had seen Mr. Hill. The man replied that he had seen Mr. Hill pass by the office a few minutes ago and enter the reading room.

Mr. Forbes-Winslow went into the reading room and looked for Mr. Hill. He was not in his usual seat or anywhere in the room. A Miss West also said she had seen Mr. Hill—that she saw him go to his customary seat. She and the man at the stock office were firm in their conviction that they had both seen Mr. Hill about eleven o'clock in the museum.

But at that hour Mr. Hill was in bed at his home with a severe cold. What was it, then, that had appeared at the museum? His immaterial body or phantom double, it seems likely. He was probably thinking very intensely of his inability to keep his appointment, and the right degree of concentration being unconsciously acquired, projection had taken place; his immaterial self had left his natural body and gone to the reading room of the British Museum to be seen there by at least two people.

I was dining as a guest one evening at the Forum Club when a woman recounted an interesting case of projection.

She had lived for some years in a house, a room of which was haunted. The apparition was that of a little boy who was seen and heard running round and round the bed in the room. All attempts to get into communication with or lay the ghost failed.

One day an elderly man called at the house and asked if he could be allowed to see the interior of it, especially one room. The room he wanted to see was the haunted room. Permission was granted, and when he saw the haunted room he said, "This was my nursery and I used to amuse myself running round and round the bed. I often think and dream of those days."

Struck with the coincidence, the woman who told the story asked the old man if he had a photograph of himself when he was a boy. He said he had, and that he would send it to her. He did

so, and she and other people in the house at once recognised it. It was the exact counterpart of the supposed ghost.

Thinking very intensely of being back as a little boy in the house, the old man had undergone projection. His immaterial body in the likeness of a little boy had visited his old nursery, while his material body was still in his present home.

I witnessed a case of projection when I was a boy. We, my half sister, her friend Miss Docker and my two sisters were spending the summer holiday at Newquay, Cornwall. We were in a small apartment house on Mount Wise. About eleven o'clock one morning I was standing on the staircase when I saw Miss Docker coming down the stairs. She was in her outdoor clothes. I moved aside to let her pass by me. She did so, crossed the hall and entered the sitting-room.

My two sisters followed her at once, but when they entered the room it was empty—there was no sign of Miss Docker. Yet in addition to my sisters, our maid saw her too.

At the time we all saw her, Miss Docker was walking with my half sister a long way from the house. What we had seen was her fetch—her immaterial double. Its appearance was of no significance; no ill happened to Miss Docker. She must unconsciously have been thinking of being back in the apartment house, and the necessary degree of concentration being acquired, projection had taken place.

I have often tried to project myself but only once succeeded. It was in Cornwall. I was walking in the hinterland of St. Ives one day when I concentrated very earnestly on being at home. When I got back my wife said, "Is it really you?" I asked her what she meant, and she said that she and several other people had heard me enter the house and cross the hall, stopping outside the sitting-room. She recognised my footsteps.

The time she heard them was the very time that I was concentrating on being at home.

Mr. Edmund Gurney has written about an interesting case of projection in Wales.

A Mr. Hale was walking one day along a lonely road in South Wales, when two young colliers overtook him. One of them struck him a violent blow on the head which felled him. They then ran away.

On recovering from the blow Mr. Hale returned to his lodgings and wrote an account of what had happened to his friend, Mr. Gull, in London.

Before he got the letter Mr. Gull was walking in Mayfair, not

thinking of Mr. Hale, when he heard someone speak to him. He turned and saw Mr. Hale, who said something to this effect: "I have not been well. I have written to you." He then disappeared.

At the time this occurred Mr. Hale was still in Wales. What Mr. Gull had seen and heard was Mr. Hale's projection—a phantom of a living person.

Lastly, and without explanation, there is a story of a clergyman in Warwickshire who stopped suddenly short in his sermon, turned deathly white and appeared to be greatly agitated. He declared afterwards that the reason for his behaviour was that he had seen his wraith sitting in a pew staring at him.

CASTLE OF HORRORS

RUSHEN CASTLE in the Isle of Man was formerly the palace of the Kings of Man, and until 1890 it was the island's prison. More strange stories are told of Rushen than probably any castle in Britain, particularly about some of its unfrequented rooms. One such story is this:

A young member of the castle staff had just finished the work he had to do in one of the occupied rooms of the castle, when to his surprise he saw a very pretty girl standing in the doorway. She was in a white garment of quaint old-world design. Wondering who she was, he was staring at her when she smiled and beckoned to him to follow her. Feeling compelled by some irresistible force to obey her, he followed her as she walked into the unoccupied portion of the castle.

Through empty room after room she went, never pausing until she came to the last of the rooms, where a strange impressive silence reigned.

In the centre of the room was an antique fourposter bed with a curtain drawn round it. The girl smiled archly at the young man as she deftly drew aside the curtain.

What he saw gave him a fearful shock. Squatting on the bed was a nude figure with long arms and legs. The face of the thing was neither human nor animal but a hair-raising mixture of both, together with some nightmarishly evil aspects. For some moments the young man stood staring at it petrified, then he collapsed and fainted.

On gradually recovering consciousness, it was some long seconds before he ventured to open his eyes wide. When at last he did so, and glanced around him, the room was empty—the girl and the terrifying thing on the bed were no longer visible.

He scrambled to his feet and ran to the occupied part of the

castle, never daring to go into the empty rooms again unless someone was with him.

A second story tells of a Welshman named Evans, from Cardiff, who, visiting Rushen Castle one day, wandered into one of the unoccupied rooms, where the only furniture was a single chair.

Although he could see no one, Evans had a feeling that he was not alone in the room. Whenever he moved he was followed by a curious eerie sound like a gasp, as if someone was in pain or out of breath. He did not believe in ghosts but was forced to think there was something very queer about the room.

When, tired with strolling around, he sat down in the chair, he found to his utter horror that it was already occupied by something cold, slimy and loathsome.

With a wild cry of terror he sprang up and rushed out of the room, and it was with some effort that he later found courage to describe his experience.

The subterranean passage believed to be under the castle also has its story. It is said that a London man on holiday in the Isle of Man, hearing about the mysterious passage, asked permission to venture in it, which was given.

There were no electric torches then and he entered the narrow, winding passage armed with a lantern, matches and candles. After threading his way along it for some considerable distance he at last saw a light ahead.

The passage became wider as he reached the end, and he saw that on the far side of an open space was an illuminated mansion. He walked towards it, and on reaching it rang the bell. The door was opened by a man in livery, who asked if he wanted to see the master of the house. He replied that he did, and the man admitted him. He was then conducted across a spacious hall to a room leading out of it, and opening the door of this room, the servant signed to him to enter.

He stepped over the threshold and abruptly halted, for seated at the table was a frightful monster. Recoiling from its malicious gaze he turned and fled the house in terror, and did not stop running till he was out of the subterranean passage.

As a prison, Rushen Castle gave rise to many other strange stories, such as the evening when two officials, glancing idly out of one of the windows, saw a procession of headless phantoms slowly cross the prison yard.

One well documented incident occurred on the day a woman criminal was executed in the castle grounds. Hours after the execution an official was standing on duty at the main entrance

of the castle when a woman in black suddenly appeared, seeming to rise out of the ground and approach him. When close to him she lifted the veil covering her face, and he saw to his horror that it was the woman who had been hanged that morning. She vanished as suddenly and inexplicably as she had come.

The same woman in black was subsequently seen by several others of the prison staff.

PHANTOM HAND IN THE JUNGLE

THE following strange adventure befell my great-grandfather, Colonel John O'Donnell, while he was paymaster-general to the forces of Oudh, in Northern India, with the rank of captain.

He had been all day in the great jungle to the north of Oudh without catching as much as a glimpse of any of the bigger game, although he had been told they simply swarmed there, and he and Ali, his favourite shikaree, were both weary and disgusted. They thought sadly of what Captain Huggins and his party, who had gone off elsewhere, would be saying when they returned in triumph to their bungalows with, perhaps, two or three tigerskins, against their own poor bag of a few antelope and a sambur deer.

For hours Captain John and Ali had been tramping along a very rough track full of ruts and holes, and overgrown in places with clumps of interlacing creepers and trailers and long, thorny canes, whose hook-shaped prickles inflicted ugly wounds in the flesh. At last, to their relief, they emerged into a broad arena intersected by a stream, the gentle babbling of which made pleasant music in their ears.

Facing them, on the far side of the stream, was a natural avenue composed of huge sal, ceesoo, toon and other trees. It had a curiously cultivated appearance amid so much that was primeval, and Captain John's interest was aroused. He loved flowers, too, and the rare creepers, all ablaze with them, that wound themselves in rich leafy masses round the tree trunks, and the parasite orchids of the most brilliant hues, nestling in the roots of old trees, strongly appealed to him.

He told Ali that he intended taking a stroll in this wild garden while the shikaree was having a fire lit and supper prepared.

"Please, sahib—please don't go in there!" Ali exclaimed excitedly.

Captain John looked at him in amazement and saw that the shikaree was trembling.

"Why not? What the devil's the matter with you?" he snapped.

"Nothing, nothing, sahib," Ali stammered—"but that avenue, it is cursed."

Captain John laughed.

"It is haunted, sahib," Ali insisted. "I saw just now—I saw."

"Yes? What did you see?" Captain John laughed again. "A hyena? I thought I spotted one myself."

Ali shook his head solemnly. "It was neither human nor animal," he said gravely. "It was an evil spirit and it was under one of those ceesoo trees," and he nodded in the direction of the avenue. "As you value your life and soul, sahib, let me pray you not to go there at night."

Captain John laughed all the louder at this and despite Ali's warning he set off at once to the avenue.

"You remain here, Ali," he said, "and be sure to get us up a good meal—meeting that spirit of yours will make me ravenously hungry!"

The united provinces of Oudh and Agra in those days, especially in the extreme north, boasted of many a wild and savage spot, and as Captain John, musket in hand, strode resolutely forward the sun had long since set, and the jungle sounds, which night had awakened far and near, now fell on his ears, as if the authors were abundant all around, in spite of their quietude all day. He gazed admiringly all around him and up at the ultramarine, starlit sky. He cared nothing for lurking dangers, all he wanted at that moment was to explore the avenue in front of him.

Suddenly, through the foliage to his right, burst a face. He could not help starting, it was so wholly unexpected. Then he became intensely interested. The face was that of a Chinese girl, with black hair cut in a straight fringe across the forehead, eyes like sloes, and a rosy, cupid bow mouth.

She smiled archly at him and beckoned to him with a dream of a slender hand, on a tapering finger of which gleamed a jewelled ring.

Captain John in those days was a bachelor, and like most Irishmen very susceptible to the charms of the fair sex. The Chinese girl fascinated him enormously and oblivious of Ali and his supper he at once set off in her path. On and on she led him, every now and then turning round and beckoning to him with the same

mysterious smile, till she finally came to a long and high palisade, in the centre of which was a big wooden door.

Opening this door she again signalled to Captain John to follow and then passed out of sight. He hurried after her, but when he crossed the threshold of the palisade, she had gone.

He found himself in a wide courtyard, the gloom and solitude of which was overbearing. Everywhere was advanced decay and desolation, dead leaves, rank weeds and moss covered stones. Fronting him, on the outskirts of all, stood a low, rambling bungalow with a verandah all round it. There was no sign of life anywhere, saving the bats, mosquitoes and fireflies that came too near to be pleasant.

Led on by an impulse he could not control, he made for the building and, swinging back a door which groaned on its rust-worn hinges, entered the premises.

He was in a spacious hall, into which opened many doors. The floor was covered with thick dust, showing the tracks of innumerable small animals and insects, but no marks of humans. It was clear therefore that the Chinese girl had not entered the place. Where, then, could she have gone?

It was a puzzle that stirred uneasy fancies in his mind but he pressed forward. On one side of him was a half open doorway, through which he could catch the glimmer of water. He made for this, calling out as he went, "Hello—is anyone here?"

There was no response, only an emphatic silence that had something unpleasantly disturbing about it. Was Ali right after all—was the place haunted? Still he went on, all his pulses throbbing.

The door he was making for led into a large room, at the far end of which were french windows. He opened them and stepped out on to a terrace which immediately overlooked an artificial lake, the edges of which were fringed with rank weeds and tall rushes.

A night bird in one of the trees on the far side of the lake wailed ominously, and Captain John was still listening to its echoes when there was a slight eddying of the water just below him and a hand suddenly rose above the surface and gripped frantically in the air.

The moonlight being very strong, he was able to see the hand with the utmost distinctness. It was slim and white, with tapering fingers, at the ends of which gleamed very long almond shaped nails. He had only seen one hand as beautiful, and that was the hand of the mysterious Chinese girl he had followed. To make the likeness more complete, on one of the fingers was a ring, the jewels in which flashed and sparkled as they caught the moonbeams.

The hand remained above the water for some seconds and then sank beneath the surface.

Almost simultaneously, just at his elbow, came a chuckle, loud and diabolical. He swung round, cold with terror, but saw no one, only the wooden walls of the bungalow, with the dark shadows of the distant trees waving very gently on their white surface.

More nerve-shaken than he had ever been in his life, Captain John re-entered the building. The staircase leading in one straight flight to the landing overhead fascinated him, it was so still and solitary, with strange shadows blackening its grimy, dust-laden boards.

He felt he must ascend it. He was about halfway up, when he paused. Coming towards him across the landing were the sounds of footsteps. He deduced from them that some slight, agile person, a woman, was in flight, pursued by one or two men. He sensed terror. Just as the foremost steps reached the head of the staircase, the other steps caught them up. There was a fearful scream that made his heart stand still with sheer horror, and then silence.

For some seconds he was too appalled to move; he just stayed there on the stairs, paralysed. When his faculties at last reasserted themselves he turned and ran. Fortunately the door leading into the courtyard was, as he had left it, wide open, and as he neared it, he heard hard footsteps bounding over the hall floor after him. Fear gave him additional speed—he was naturally a good sprinter—and he got safely through the courtyard and out into the avenue beyond. Not once did he pause till he reached the camp fire, and Ali.

When he rejoined Captain Huggins several days later and told him of his strange adventure, Mr. Vandergucht, a Dutch merchant who was one of the members of Huggins' hunting party, remarked, "Oh, I know that house in the avenue. I often used to pass near it when I was living in that part of the country. The tradition is that a Frenchman, Bonivon or some such name, was murdered there, and suspicion falling on his young and very attractive Chinese mistress, she was seized by certain of his relatives and friends and hurled into the lake you mention, where some crocodiles made short work of her.

"Ever since then the house and avenue have borne the reputation of being haunted."

STRANGE SOUNDS: AND THE SEVEN WHISTLERS

THREE knocks on the front door or wall in a house; a rumbling on the floor, and a sound of a heavy body falling are portents of ill omen. I heard a rapping on the door of my room as if by knuckles prior to the death of my half sister, and also the beating of a gong.

I also heard on two occasions in a haunted house loud bangings during the night on my door. In the possibility that the sounds might be due to some person I set a trap, but it availed nothing, the sounds still came.

Evshott House, Hampshire, was haunted by strange sounds satisfactorily explainable only on the grounds of the supernatural; also Lowther Hall, the Westmorland home of Lord Lonsdale.

On Barry Island, near Cardiff, extraordinary sounds of hammering and forging were formerly heard.

In Calvados Castle, Normandy, the most alarming noises such as bellowings of a bull, cries, shrieks, groans, racing footsteps and bangs on doors were nightly heard for a long period. All efforts to explain them, save on the grounds of the supernatural, failed.

Loud noises are sometimes heard when there is a death.

In Cottertown, Auchanacie, in Banffshire, two old people living in a farmhouse were brutally murdered. On the day of the murder two strange men called at the house, and after they left a loud unaccountable noise was heard on the road they had taken. All efforts to trace this sound to a natural cause failed.

The murder of the old people occurred on January 11, 1797, and though we are not told so in my reference to it, there is little doubt but that it was done by the two strange men.

The mysterious ringing of bells in houses has sometimes happened. Carpenters have been called in to find out the cause, and have failed.

There are many cases of phantom music.

Samuel Foote in 1740 while on a visit to his father's house in

Truro was awakened in the night by sweet music in his room. About the same time his uncle Sir John Goodacre was murdered by ruffians. Sir John had been dining with his brother, Captain Goodacre, at a friend's house in Clifton, Bristol. The two brothers were on very bad terms. On the way back from dining Sir John was waylaid, taken on board his brother's ship in Bristol and strangled.

Captain Goodacre not only witnessed the murder but supplied the murderers with the rope with which it was done.

There was no explaining the sweet music Foote heard at the time of his uncle's murder except on the grounds of the supernatural.

There is a story told of a house in Denmark being haunted by phantom music. The daughter of the house many years ago was passionately fond of dancing and at a ball one night swore she would keep on dancing if it was the devil himself who was her partner.

Suddenly a handsome stranger entered the room, and asked her to dance with him. She did. They kept whirling round faster and faster till the girl fell to the floor. To everyone's horror she was dead.

The handsome stranger, whom no one knew, left the house without being seen to go. Ever afterwards the house was haunted at midnight by satanic music and the phantom of the dead girl whirling round and round the ballroom.

A house not far from Dublin is haunted by the ghost of a beautiful music hall star who married an Irish nobleman. The house was his. He grew tired of his wife and often left her alone in the house for long periods.

She died when she was young and after her death her ghost could be heard playing her favourite airs on the sitting-room piano.

Drums are closely associated with the supernatural. In addition to the haunting of Fyvie Castle in Aberdeenshire, by a phantom drummer, a wall in the grounds of a private house in the North of England is haunted by the beating of a phantom drum. There is a tragic story to account for the haunting.

During an annual festivity, in which there was a contest in archery, the owner of the house was pushed or caused to be thrown into a well in his grounds, and ever afterwards ghostly sounds of a drum could be heard at night coming from the well.

Hurstmonceaux Castle in Sussex is rumoured to be haunted by the beating of a phantom drum.

Church bells are also closely associated with the supernatural, as instance the bells of Tunstall, in Norfolk, and Fisherley Brow, near Lonsdale, in Westmorland. The church bells in both places were heard to ring after they had been swallowed up under water. There is a similar legend regarding a submerged town in Cornwall.

Mines have been haunted by ghostly sounds from the earliest times.

There was, and possibly still is, an almost general belief in Britain in the Knockers. Miners declared that in the shafts on still nights, when no one was actively engaged they could hear the ghostly sounds of knocking and picking. Carne, in his "Tales of the West", not only mentions the ghostly sounds in mines of knocking and picking but says the wheeling of barrows and the falling of earth can also be heard.

In *The Times* of September 21, 1874, it is stated that some of the miners of the collieries in North Warwickshire refused to go down into the pits because they had heard the Seven Whistlers during Sunday in the vicinity of Bedworth. They were not working on Sunday but were due to resume working on the Monday. The whistling, which is in the air, has never been satisfactorily explained except on the grounds of the supernatural.

Wheal Vor mine is haunted by a ghostly sound resembling the emptying and thud of a cartload of rubbish. Whoever hears it is doomed to die very shortly. The Wheal Vor mine is also said to be haunted by a phantom hare.

Some Welsh mines are rumoured to be haunted by ghostly, alarming sounds and apparitions of men who have perished in the pits. Other apparitions, together with strange noises, are believed to haunt mines in various parts of Britain.

The Polbreen mine in Cornwall used to be rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of a woman who had committed suicide. A mine in the North of England was formerly said to be haunted by the ghost of a man with a white face and menacing eyes who appeared with startling abruptness in one of the shafts.

A strange story is told of the haunting of a mine at Whitehaven, in Cumberland. A man was deprived of his post as overseer in the mine, owing to bad behaviour, and given an inferior job. As a consequence he took a violent dislike to the man who had succeeded him as overseer, and connived at his death, but in killing him he also killed himself.

Ever afterwards his ghost and the ghost of the new overseer haunted the mine. They could be heard re-enacting the quarrel which had taken place between them in their lifetime.

THE PHANTOMS OF DUNLOBIN

THERE are a number of reputed haunted castles in Ireland, and Dunlobin is one. It had been standing empty for a long time when Mr. Morgan Hessiter read an advertisement for it in a country magazine: an ancient castle in the West of Ireland to be let unfurnished at the rental of a hundred and twenty pounds a year.

He went to see it.

The castle stood in sixty acres of well wooded land, in which there was a lake and trout stream. It was founded by Rupert Fitzlogan in the 13th century; a large, turreted building with mullion windows, many rooms, passages, corridors and a dungeon.

Ivy covered and nestling among trees, it presented a picturesque appearance, and Mr. Hessiter, a man of independent means, was fascinated by it. He was a keen fisherman and revelled at the thought of fishing for trout in the stream.

After viewing the interior of the castle he told the agent that he would take it at the rent stated for a period of three years, with the option of renewing his tenancy at the same rental. Everything being fixed he moved into the castle with his family, consisting of his wife, her sister Constance, his two sons, Frederick and Richard, both beginning careers in the Army, and three daughters. They were all delighted with the castle and anticipated a pleasant social life there, with plenty of lawn tennis and house parties.

For the first four weeks everything went smoothly. Then, one morning when the three girls were on the main frontal lawn, they saw a tall, cowed monk coming towards them. They wondered what he was doing there. He moved with long, silent strides which gave them a creepy sensation. They were Protestants and felt an aversion towards priests and monks. He passed by without seeming to notice them, and was lost to sight in a thick growth of trees.

They indignantly told their father about the monk.

"Oh, I expect he comes from a neighbouring monastery," Hessiter said, "and he has been in the habit of entering these grounds. He has not been told the castle is now let."

The girls still thought it a great impertinence of the monk to enter the grounds. He should have known the castle was occupied.

A few days later Hessiter was fly fishing in the stream, and had landed several trout all over one pound, when he suddenly had the feeling he was being watched. Glancing round he saw a tall, hooded monk standing a few yards distant. Owing to the hood he could not see the monk's face, but he sensed (he said afterwards) that the monk was regarding him intently. Wishing to appear friendly he said "Good morning!" and remarked on the fine day; but there was no reply and the monk went slowly away.

Hessiter thought this most unfriendly. On returning to the castle he told Bridget Flynn, one of the servants, who was middle-aged and a native of the locality, about the monk and enquired if there was a monastery near the castle. Bridget said the nearest monastery was at Ballygandle, about ten miles away. She had never seen a monk in the grounds, and had no idea who he was. She supposed that, being young and active, he must have walked all the way from Ballygandle.

The two sons, both of whom were spending leave at home, were the next to see the mysterious monk. They had been out exploring the neighbourhood, and were halfway across the grounds when they saw the tall monk approaching them. He came along with long, silent strides, the hood he was wearing preventing them seeing his face.

"Good morning, father," Frederick said cheerfully—"you seem to like these grounds."

The monk made no reply. He came steadily on with measured strides, and passed by the youths without appearing to notice them. They turned and watched him till he was lost to sight in the trees.

"A cool customer!" Frederick said. "Did you feel anything queer about him?"

"Yes," Richard said. "He gave me an uncanny feeling. It may have been due to the hood he was wearing."

The mysterious monk furnished a topic among the Hessiters for some days. They thought, however, that it was not advisable to talk about him in front of the servants.

A few nights after the experience of the two sons, the Hessiters were awakened one night by loud cries and groans coming from the dungeon, which was in their wing—the West of the castle.

The servants, including the butler, slept in the East Wing, only part of which was furnished, and fortunately they did not hear the sounds from below.

The Hessiters were sure now that the castle was haunted, and that the monk must be one of the ghosts. But as their agreed tenancy was a long one they tried to minimise this upset. Nevertheless, they were perturbed.

One evening shortly afterwards they all heard sounds of music coming from the room that they called the ballroom, and went in a body to the door of the room and listened. There were clear strains of weird music and the noises of dancing. Richard opened the door of the room and the sounds ceased at once; the room was in total darkness. But directly he closed the door the sounds were renewed.

This phenomenon went on for several nights and then ceased, and they did not hear any noise from the ballroom again.

Things went uneventfully for a few days, then the Hessiters were once again roused at night, this time by trappings on the staircase leading from the hall to the rooms above; heavy tramping and the distinct clanking of swords and armour, as if a troop of soldiers in armour were ascending the stairs.

The women were now greatly frightened, though when Hessiter and his sons kept watch by the staircase the noises stopped.

The servants now got a scare. The young housemaid awakened with a scream one night and said she had felt a cold, clammy hand on her forehead. The other servants had much trouble in pacifying her; they told her she had had a nightmare. This was the first time anything ghostly had occurred in the East Wing.

During the last week of leave for the two sons, a party of friends came on a visit to the castle and a dance was arranged in the ballroom, which assumed a gay appearance. Professional musicians were hired from a distance for the occasion, and every means was taken to make the dance a success.

The guests were all thoroughly enjoying themselves when suddenly there was a loud blast of a trumpet in the hall. There was something so eerie about it that the dancing stopped, everyone very startled, and all turned to Hessiter for an explanation. All he could say was that he believed the castle to be haunted, but that they need have no fear for the ghosts were quite harmless.

The male members of the party all went into the hall and searched around but could find nothing physical to explain the trumpeting. The dancing then continued, though with some of

the guests clearly very nervous. However, nothing further occurred to alarm them.

A few days after this party the three daughters were in the grounds one afternoon when they heard a horse galloping towards them. The sound of its hoofs on the soil, and the slight rattling of armour as if someone was on it, were distinctly audible, yet they did not see anything. The horse drew nearer and nearer to them, and dashed past, snorting and panting.

When they told their father what they had heard, he calmed them and said, "So long as the ghosts don't harm you, and the servants don't panic and leave us, we must put up with all these strange happenings. They will cease if we ignore them."

But within a week of this date, when the family were taking an airing in the grounds one evening (the sons had since returned to duty) they saw the East Wing aglow with a lurid, unearthly light. This lasted for some moments, and then died out as suddenly as it had begun. While it lasted trees and other objects in its near vicinity stood out with startling clearness.

Still Hessiter refused to be alarmed. However, almost a month later he was going up to bed one night after sitting up reading later than usual, when he saw coming along the corridor of the landing a tall figure in armour. The figure made no sound but stalked silently past him, disappearing abruptly on reaching a bay window at the end of the corridor.

The helmet hid the face of the phantom but Hessiter felt it gazing malevolently at him through the visor. Much startled he got hurriedly into his room, which adjoined his wife's, and shut and locked the door.

When, next morning, he related this experience to his wife, she insisted very forcibly that they now leave the place, and threatened that if he would not agree to their going she would go herself, taking the girls with her.

Hessiter therefore—not without some relief—ended his tenancy of Dunlobin, and was fortunate in that an approach had been made to the agent from another quarter with the object of turning the castle into a museum.

Hessiter never enquired into the history of the castle and the probable cause of the hauntings, but there can be little doubt that they sprang from the many crimes which are believed to have been perpetrated in the castle since Rupert Fitzlogan founded it.

THE STRANGER IN THE FOG

THE following story came to me from the daughter of the man who underwent the experience. I will call him Mr. Owen.

Owen did not believe in ghosts and certainly not in anyone having possession of psychic powers. He was a complete sceptic, not to say a cynic, and even after his strange experience he remained similarly dogmatic though troubled. It was some time afterwards before he related the incident to his family as a "dream" he had had, yet it was plain, said the daughter, that her late father was not absolutely convinced that it was a dream. He was in fact, in the position of numberless people who encounter something extraordinary and find it hard to resolve the mystery themselves, yet are chary of seeking an audience of others.

I tell the story as it was given to me by the daughter, and in view of the absence of any direct evidence, without further comment.

Owen was hurrying from Trinity Road, Wandsworth, to Clapham, late one winter evening. It was foggy when he started out and when he was nearly halfway across Wandsworth Common the fog was so thick that he lost his way. He was groping about trying to get back on to the pathway when a voice came to him from out of the gloom.

"Lost your way, sir? Follow me."

"I want to get to Clapham Junction," Owen said.

"That's all right," the voice said. "I'm going there. Follow me."

Owen did not need to be told again. He stuck to the stranger with burr-like persistency. The man's voice had sounded pleasant and educated.

The Common was very silent. The only sounds came from the distant roads. The air was damp and cold; it penetrated through his clothes and made him cough. Twice they passed figures

struggling like themselves to get across the Common. The Common in the 'nineties was infested with prostitutes at night, and maybe the figures were these; so muffled up were they that there was no telling their sex.

Owen was immeasurably relieved when the sodden turf ended and he found himself in a well-lighted thoroughfare. He thanked the stranger for his well timed aid, and they walked on together.

"Are you going to Victoria?" the stranger enquired.

Owen told him he was.

"So am I," the stranger said. "I have to catch a train from Victoria to Brighton."

"I have too," Owen said. "It would be nice if I might travel with you."

"By all means," the stranger replied cordially. "I shall be glad of company."

On arriving at Victoria they got into a second-class compartment to Brighton. The fog had now begun to clear a little and show a few faint stars.

"The weather is very similar now to what it was one night four years ago," the stranger remarked as the train pulled out of Victoria.

"You recollect that night?" Owen said.

"I have good reason to," the stranger replied. "I was congratulating myself, as we started from Victoria, that I had a compartment to myself, when a man got in. He sat opposite to me. I did not like his looks. He had a low, sloping forehead, a receding chin—in fact he had hardly any chin—a long, bony nose and protruding pale eyes. It was an ill-balanced face. He was an ill-looking man. He wore a shabby, ill-fitting black suit.

"I was tired. My vocation was that of a traveller for a jewellery firm and I had specimens in a case by my side. I vaguely noticed the man looking at the case, but the steady motion of the train, the monotonous rumble of its wheels, made me sleepy. I was nearly dropping off when a movement of the man opposite roused me. He was holding a knife in one of his hands and before I could place myself on the defensive, he sprang at me and we were locked in a violent struggle."

"In which you were the victor?" Owen said.

"No," the stranger said. "My assailant, though slight, was very wiry. He was much younger than me. I tried to get at the window cord communicating with the guard's van, but he drew me back and plunged his knife into me."

"But you were fortunate—his blow missed a vital spot?" Owen

said, averting his eyes on feeling rather sick at the scene so graphically described.

"No," the stranger said. "The blow did not miss. It killed me."

"It did what?" Owen gasped, looking up again not believing his ears.

There was no reply. The stranger had vanished. Owen was alone in the compartment; and the train was rattling along at some fifty miles an hour.

THE FAIRY ROCK

BRITTANY, like Cornwall, abounds in cromlechs and dolmens. One of them is called La Foche aux fees, or the Fairy Rock, because it was long haunted by fairies.

It is in the Commune of Esse between 20 and 30 miles from Rennes, and consists of a long covered avenue of 42 stones of various sizes. Associated with the dolmen are innumerable traditional stories and legends of ghostly phenomena and fairy lore.

One of the latter is this:—

A hunter was pursuing a deer one day. Over hill and dale he chased, never getting any nearer to it, although he repeatedly galloped faster. At last, drawing his bow, he shot an arrow at it, exclaiming, "Should you be the devil himself I will pursue thee till eternity."

The deer struck by the arrow halted at the entrance of the dolmen and turned into a maiden of dazzling beauty.

"Have thee thy wish," she cried. "Thou shalt hunt for ever."

She vanished and the huntsman, it is said, may still be seen careering madly on a white horse, bow in hand, after an invisible quarry.

Another story relates to the days of Druidism.

It was the custom of this particular sect of Druids to offer up to the sun human sacrifices two or three times a year. Usually the victims were criminals or prisoners captured in war.

On one occasion the larder of victims was bare—not a criminal, not a prisoner of war. One of the priestesses who did the butchering was a young and lovely girl.

"No victims," she said. "Then you shall have my youngest brother."

Screaming with horror the boy was placed on a flat altar stone in the mouth of the dolmen and the priestess sharpened her knife in anticipation of the cruel deed entrusted to her.

The boy pleaded in vain for his life.

"Were you God himself I would kill thee," his sister said.

Just as she was about to plunge her knife into his helpless body, he cursed her.

"May your soul be doomed to haunt this spot for ever," he cried.

Quite unmoved, she ripped his stomach open and then calmly and slowly cut his throat.

She did not survive him long. For her impious words and in fulfilment of his curse she was doomed to haunt for ever the Fairy Rock.

Tradition also has it that round the rock, with hands clasped, lovely fairy girls used to dance and sing nightly, when the moon was full and the stars shone brightly. On one occasion a country swain stood watching them and was so enraptured that he knelt down and worshipped them.

"Go home," they cried, "and see what awaits there."

He tore himself reluctantly away, and went home to find to his great surprise, a large box full of gold coins, a gift of the fairies. He was a rich man.

He spent his money quickly and when it was all gone, he visited the Fairy Rock night after night, but he never saw the fairies again.

BANSHEES AND OTHER DEATH WARNINGS

CERTAIN families have warnings of the death of one of their relatives, or great friends. One of the most widely known of these family death warnings is what is generally called a banshee.

A banshee is different from other family ghosts inasmuch as it is not restricted to one locality but follows the fortunes of the family to which it is attached no matter where that family or a branch of it may be. The origin of a banshee is rarely known. It is always feminine as the name, "Woman of Sorrow" implies.

All attempts to communicate with it or exorcise it fail. The only people who have a banshee are of ancient Celtic Irish extraction; hence it is nearly always confined to the O's and Mc's.

It was heard by every adult in the house the evening immediately prior to my father's death. It sang a kind of dirge that sounded at first inside the house, and then outside and around it.

The real banshee generally sings, never screams or howls. I heard it when I was living in a newly built house in Cornwall. My wife and I were awakened one night by the sound of singing in a woman's voice inside the house. I got up and went on to the landing, where I found all the other occupants of the house grouped together listening. The singing, which was very distracted, sounded in our midst.

One of the listeners asked me what it was. I told him it was my family banshee come as a warning to me of the approaching death of a relative. I was right, for two days after hearing the banshee, I was informed of the death of a close relative.

Our banshee is never seen, only heard. The oldest line of the O'Nalls, who lived in a castle in Tyrone, used to see their banshee. It resembled a beautiful girl in green. If she was standing still in a certain room in the castle no calamity followed, but if she was walking to and fro there it was a sure sign of an approaching death.

The O'Briens also have a banshee that is seen. A graphic account of her appears in the memoirs of Lady Fanshawe edited by E. M. Forster.

Lady Fanshawe was staying with the O'Briens at their castle in County Limerick when she was awakened one night by a sound at her window, and on looking around she saw the face of a lovely girl pressed against the window gazing at her. The apparition exclaimed "Ahone! Ahone!" in a very sad voice, and then vanished.

That same night, at a later hour, the head of the family died.

The most dreadful family ghost to my knowledge is in a branch of the Worcestershire Caldwells. It is said that before the death of one of them an indefinite shape creeps into the room of a member of the family and crawls on to his or her bed, remaining there for some seconds, when it crawls out of the room.

The Grants of Rothiemurchus, Inverness-shire, are or were haunted by the Dodach Au Dun, or Ghost of the Hill; the Kinchardines by the Lham-Dearg, or Spectre of the Bloody Hand.

The appearance of a white breasted bird is a death warning to the Devonshire Osenhams, while two owls perching on the house of the Arundells of Wardour, Wiltshire, is regarded as a similar warning. Stranger is the ghost of the Clifton family. Prior to the death of one of them a large sturgeon has been seen forcing its way up the River Trent to their estate.

The falling of a branch of the Edgewell Oak has been a portent of calamity to the former occupants of Castle Dalhousie, in Midlothian.

The Eglingtons have or had the Bodach Glas—the grey phantom man. The story goes that a former Earl of Eglinton was playing golf one day when he abruptly stopped and said he could play no longer, for he had seen the Bodach Glas for the third time. He died suddenly that same night.

The death token of the Cornish Vingoos is a ghostly illumination of a cavern on their Cornish estate.

Two very unusual death warnings occur in Ireland. One is the gathering of foxes in the grounds of a nobleman before the death of a member of his family; the other is the sudden opening by an invisible agency of a bound and locked chest prior to a bereavement.

Phantom heads are portents of death in some families. It is in the case of the Venezia family of Donati.

Jacopo Donati was sitting in his room one day when the head of a strange man was thrust through the suddenly opened door.

Knowing it was not one of his servants but a stranger, Jacopo drew his sword and searched the house. All the doors were found to be fastened on the inside, and the windows securely fastened. The servants had seen a similar head thrust into their respective rooms.

Donati's only child died unexpectedly that night.

A family with whom I am closely associated have a phantom head as their death portent.

There are two sisters in the family. The eldest one was going upstairs towards twilight one day when she saw a head looking down at her from the top of the landing balustrade.

The head, which was crowned with a tangled mass of tow coloured hair, looked as if it had been buried for weeks and then dug up. The eyes were pale and glittered evilly—the head was wholly hellish. For some seconds the elder sister stood petrified, then, recovering, she crossed herself and uttered a prayer, whereupon the head vanished.

A few days later she received tidings of the death of her father.

The younger sister saw the same head in the same place and at about the same hour before the death of her mother, who survived her husband by several years.

Finally, as a death warning distinct from the family phantoms, Sir Bernard Burke tells of a strange tale concerning the Rev. James Crawford, rector of the parish of Killina in Leitrim.

In the autumn of 1779, Crawford was out riding one day with his sister-in-law, Mrs. Hannal Wilson, who rode pillion behind him. He started to cross the Rosses on the coast of Donegal.

They had got to a place where the water reached the saddle laps when Mrs. Wilson became frightened and begged Crawford to turn back. Crawford, however, told her he thought it was quite safe as there was another horseman about 20 yards ahead of them.

Mrs. Wilson told Crawford to call out to the horseman and enquire the depth of the intervening water, and Crawford stopped his horse and shouted to the man ahead to stop. The horseman at once did so, and turning, revealed a death's-head which grinned fiercely at Crawford and his companion.

Appalled, Crawford at once turned and rode back to the house.

He told his wife and the people with whom he was staying about the phantom rider, and was informed by them that the apparition was well known in the locality—it was regarded as a warning not to cross the Rosses.

In spite of the warning Crawford later attempted to cross the Rosses—on September 27, 1779—and was drowned.

also read

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